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UNSETTLED ELITES:  
REPRODUCING THE HACENDADO IN NEOLIBERAL ECUADOR

BY

JENNIFER ANN HARDIN

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Andrew Orta, Chair  
Emeritus Professor Norman E. Whitten  
Professor Matti Bunzl  
Associate Professor Arlene Torres

## Abstract

Based on approximately 16 months of field research in Andean Ecuador, this dissertation is an ethnography of the reproduction of hacendado elite distinction in an environment of neoliberal volatility and unease. Evoking the Spanish colonial past, Criollo independence and nation-building, hacendado elites embody the close association in Ecuador of the possession of landed property with racialized forms of social prestige that have defined the standards for national cultural norms of distinction and political economic power. They are also often portrayed as forces of exploitation and stagnation, suggesting that their positions of privilege are particularly vulnerable during the periods of dramatic change characteristic of neoliberalism. My research concludes that hacendado elites are reproducing their status within new social conditions and deploying novel tactics in the process that are responsive to Ecuador's deepening integration in the global economy.

The dissertation begins by addressing the historical waxing and waning of hacendado elite privilege over time and in relation to broader changes in the country. I argue that forms of colonial ethnoracial social organization inherited from Europe were adapted to the material and ideational needs of an emerging modernity in the New World. Traditional hacendado elite assumptions about the superiority, civility and modernity of "white" Spanish colonists and their descendants undergird continuing efforts to justify monopolization of resources, social separation from other populations and the country's chronic "underdevelopment."

The remainder of the dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of hacendado elites and the strategies employed to reproduce their privilege in the contemporary moment. Hacendado elites use symbolic and material markers of distinction linked to colonialism to signal group membership and inclusion to others. These include ancestry, genealogy and landed

property, all of which accentuate the “whiteness” of hacendado elites by connecting them to a western European cultural heritage, ensuring minimal biological or social mixture with other groups and facilitating ongoing separation from the Ecuadorian masses. Their styles of life and consumption patterns highlight a history of Western education, cosmopolitanism and immersion in global modernity.

The dissertation also considers hacendado elite strategies for resisting downward mobility on the social ladder and challenges to their privileged position as the possessors of legitimate culture. To fortify social boundaries, neoliberal and nationalist elite discourses about the transformative power of education and educational credentials for social mobility are tempered by the reassertion of forms of comportment, customs and styles of life that define hacendado elite distinction and underscore longstanding elite ideals about “social whiteness” and essential qualities that signal the possession of cultural capital associated with “good breeding.”

I conclude that echoes of the colonial in the present do not necessarily represent legacies that defy the multitude of transformational forces characteristic of the modern period. Instead, they reflect creative reconstructions and reinventions explicitly responsive to postcolonial dictates of global modernity. This process is evident in hacienda cultural heritage and ecotourism ventures that aim to modernize and revitalize landed wealth by embracing neoliberal business models while rearticulating historical social class divisions in Ecuador.

## Acknowledgments

This dissertation reflects a very long path of individual inquiry and exploration that would not have been possible without the encouragement, participation and support of many people and organizations. First and foremost, my quirky family – Nikki Hardin, Michael Hardin, Kristin Hardin-Stafford and Sean Hardin – bestowed upon me the strength, fortitude, imagination, curiosity and endless humor that made this journey possible. Whatever questions they may have had about my choice to return to graduate school on a path that sometimes seemed to have no end, they offered unconditional support and inspiration, buoyed me through the turbulence of daily life and unexpected loss and urged me on to the finish line no matter the obstacles. They simply would not let me give up. No words on paper will ever be able to convey my gratitude for the many blessings of family. My mother, Nikki, not only provided a living example of the value of following your dreams, she carefully read and edited every word of this dissertation thereby marrying her own passion for writing with my love of cultural anthropology. My sister, Kristin, is the smartest, strongest and funniest person I know. She is my rock and never let me forget for one second the humanity and capacity for love that exists in all of us. My brother, Sean, kept me laughing with his sharp wit and reminded me to not take myself too seriously. His half-joking questions about whether I would graduate before my young nieces and nephews always motivated me to “get back to work.” My late father, Michael, provided the foundation for it all and taught us about perseverance and intellectual curiosity. I may not have fulfilled his wish that I would become a nurse, but I hope that he will perhaps settle for a “doctor.”

I am immeasurably grateful for my partner in life and love, Aaron Peters. My deepest thanks go to Aaron for supporting me through all of the stress and anxiety of writing a

dissertation while working full-time in a high stress and conflict-ridden job. Thank you for lifting me up through all of the tears, angst and fears of failure. Thank you for your matter-of-fact attitude conveying in no uncertain terms that success was the only conceivable outcome. You never doubted me or us. While the loss we shared is silently woven into these pages, so too is the deep love and commitment that sustained us.

My dissertation committee – Andrew Orta, Norman E. Whitten, Matti Bunzl and Arlene Torres – challenged me to think critically about my project and encouraged me to follow a path less traveled in Ecuador. Their feedback and suggestions about additional routes of inquiry and points of consideration profoundly affected my development as a scholar. I am extremely grateful for the serendipity that led me to Andrew Orta’s office doorstep. He has not only been an amazing advisor and mentor, but also a constant friend. His intellectual rigor and uncanny ability to unpack and succinctly articulate the most complex social phenomena are inspirational. Andy’s scholarly and professional counsel also provided a safe space for me to contemplate and enact a new project within a potentially atypical field site and to somewhat awkwardly search for the language to describe the intersections between cultural practice, capitalism and social hierarchy. Any success I achieve in this dissertation and in my career are in no small measure the result of his mentorship and encouragement. Thank you, Andy. Norman Whitten exposed me to the many nuances and complexities of Ecuadorian social relations and the power of symbolic action. My work with hacendado elite families in Andean Ecuador represents an attempt to take up Norman and Sibby (Dorothea) Whitten’s challenge to interrogate the ways in which symbolic systems and political economy are interwoven to both produce and resist hegemony. Matti Bunzl continues to astound me with his theoretical prowess and generosity. Matti’s provocative graduate seminars opened up my thinking about the ways in which elite

social roles, identities, practices and markers in local settings intersect with global forces of neoliberal modernity. Arlene Torres' ethnohistorical analyses of race in the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States provided an important framework to think through contemporary cultural practices over the *longue durée*. Moreover, her research on social institutions and social relations in particular cultural domains inspired my thoughts on how class and culture articulate in everyday practice and infuse social hierarchy. Her warmth and compassion helped me navigate the sometimes perilous waters of academic politics. One of my few graduate school regrets is that that I was not able to participate in her lively graduate seminars.

Colleagues and friends in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois created an intellectual space that fostered my growth as a scholar and a person. My colleagues taught me the importance of fearlessly interrogating my own privilege and how it contributes to pervasive nested hierarchies within and outside of academia. I was also lucky to have an amazing support network of friends who made the whole endeavor a lot more fun and exciting, as well as intellectually stimulating. I'd especially like to thank William, Tina, Emanuel and Kayla Marina Hope, Jason Ritchie, Julie Williams and Andrew Asher for making Urbana-Champaign feel like home. Ellen Moodie has been a true friend and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to serve as her teaching assistant. I absolutely could not have completed the doctoral program without the benefit of Liz Spears' unflagging guidance and good humor.

Most of all, I am indebted to the traditional hacendado elite individuals and families who shared their stories with me. To maintain their confidentiality, I am unable to name them here but still want to publicly express my gratitude. In the event that my consultants do not agree with the analyses contained in this dissertation, I hope that they will nevertheless recognize their unadulterated voices in these pages. In addition to providing much of the data that served as the

foundation for this work, my consultants opened their homes and themselves to me in ways that significantly affected the path that my life would take after returning to the United States.

I'm also extremely thankful for my many friends in Ecuador who always make my time there feel like going home. María and Nico took me in and nursed me back to health each time I was stricken with the *bichos*. When my father passed away while I was living in Quito, María refused to let me wallow and showed me the true meaning of *adelante*! The "other María" and Amaranta have been wonderful girlfriends and confidantes. Their friendship offered a much-needed "release valve" for the anxieties and insecurities that seem to go hand in hand with fieldwork. Colleagues at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito provided an intellectual home base and introduced me to many people who would end up contributing to this dissertation. I am grateful for their gracious generosity.

Finally, the opportunity to study full-time and conduct extended fieldwork abroad is a special privilege that would not have been available to me without generous support from a variety of funders. My studies, field research and dissertation development were facilitated by financial support from the Fulbright Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship Program, Nelle M. Signor Dissertation Fellowship in International Relations, Tinker Foundation Field Research Grant Program, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship Program and the Department of Anthropology, Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship Program, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.



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## INTRODUCTION: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE REPRODUCTION OF TRADITIONAL HACENDADO ELITE STATUS AND DISTINCTION IN ANDEAN ECUADOR

*One summer night soon after arriving in Ecuador for a short summer research stint in 2004, I found myself, with full-blown soroche (altitude sickness) in the urban villa of one of the extended Andean elite families with whom I was working in the capital city Quito. The home is located in a “modern,” upper-class residential area, replete with private guards and the near-constant chirping of car alarms. On this particular evening, I was invited to “tea” with the extended family and told in no uncertain terms that soroche or no, refusal of the offer was not an option, at least not a polite or gracious one. That evening, “tea” took place at around 9 p.m. and began with potato soup and fava beans – a quintessentially “traditional” meal associated with the rural Andean hinterlands. After eating, we retired to the drawing room where we women drank red wine or tea spiked with some type of trago (a cane alcohol I have been treated to most often during long rides on horseback through hacienda lands and at rural festivals in connection with indigenous and mestizo communities adjacent to family hacienda. The men drank brandy and smoked Cuban cigars, and the children gulped down glasses of Coca Cola. While we chatted, big band music played in the background. When the conversation landed on the topic of the Spanish, several people in the room turned and made spitting gestures toward the highly polished wood floor. A string of obscenities directed at “los Españoles” followed. Enveloped in a trago- and soroche-induced haze of liminal consciousness, this reaction initially seemed reasonable to me given that the Spanish were colonial oppressors in South America for more than 300 years before the 19th century wars for independence were won. And yet, within the hour, our party had moved into the formal living room where my hosts proceeded to display cherished family documents and family heralds that trace their family’s Spanish lineage to at least the early 14th century. The family trees and documents of pedigree were accompanied by vivid and detailed stories illustrating the family’s nobility and their ongoing intimate relationship with Europe. And just like that, “los Españoles” appeared to have found redemption.*

As I was to discover during the course of multiple research stints, the encounter described above reflects a number of ambivalent (and shifting) relationships that traditional *hacendado* elites in the highlands of Ecuador navigate as they attempt to reproduce their own privilege in rapidly changing socioeconomic and political contexts. They are modern social actors who promote a particular form of “traditional” Ecuadorian identity that cannot be disentangled from colonialism, global capitalism or cosmopolitan consumption. In this dissertation, I consider the

nuances of traditional hacendado elite postcolonial ambivalence in relation to the dramatic social, economic and political changes that have taken place in Ecuador. The research grew out of my desire to understand what effects, if any, the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Ecuador had on what has been described by many as an intensely rigid and racialized system of social hierarchy, one that continues to rely on notions of intrinsic and inherent difference first introduced during the era of Spanish colonialism. In exploring the contours of new forms of capitalist practice introduced throughout the world through neoliberal reforms, I was struck by the contradictory claims offered about how implementation of such reforms would affect elites in recipient countries. Given Ecuador's troubled history with neoliberal reforms and linked structural adjustment programs that aimed to alter the nature of the country's economy and the role of its government by emphasizing market liberalization and deregulation (Fichtl 1999:17; Ugarteche 1999:22–23), I wondered if the country's notoriously inflexible system of social hierarchy was indeed transforming?

Analyses of Ecuadorian social relations commonly referred to as a pyramid of social hierarchy in the country with Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous peoples on the bottom, mestizos occupying the middle and a small group of elite Ecuadorians (also considered exclusively white or, more correctly, *blanco* or *español*) at the pinnacle of the pyramid (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Stark 1981; Stutzman 1981; Weismantel 1988; Weismantel 2001; Weismantel and Eisenman 1998; Whitten 1981a; Whitten 2003a; Whitten 2003b; Whitten 2004; Whitten 2007; Wibbelsman 2004; Wogan 2004). Many analyses have also detailed social boundaries marked by the relationship of “whiteness” in Ecuador to high status, power, wealth, civilized culture, urbanity and progress, as well as the differentiation of elite status along the lines of old wealth, power and prestige (*gente de bien* and *La Sociedad*) and achieved position in terms of new wealth and

political position (Rahier 1998; de la Torre 1999; Whitten 1981a; Whitten 2003b; Whitten and Torres 1998). While this research has recognized the relevance of the elite social sector to understandings of all positions in the social hierarchy, a vast majority of the studies approach the topic of social hierarchy from the bottom up, focusing on indigenous groups and/or Afro-Ecuadorian populations. With a few notable exceptions (Brownrigg 1972; Bowen 2008; Roitman 2009), elites are mostly presented as one-dimensional foils in relation to indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian protagonists. In particular, hacendado elites are often portrayed in popular and scholarly literature as polarizing figures in Ecuador's history. These large landowners in the Ecuadorian highlands have long been iconic figures on the social landscape bringing to mind both the Spanish colonial past and the process of *Criollo* independence and nation building. They are also often portrayed as forces of exploitation and stagnation, suggesting that their positions of privilege may be particularly vulnerable during periods of dramatic social and political economic change.

Hacendado families have also historically been representative of the enduring close association in Ecuador of the possession of landed property in the form of haciendas with racialized forms of social prestige that define the standards for national cultural norms of status, taste and political-economic power. In recent decades, hacendados, like entrenched elites elsewhere, have confronted a set of challenges deriving in large measure from the range of loosely interlinked economic, social and political policies often dubbed "neoliberalism." Reflecting the dominant conventional wisdom of influential international lenders, the development establishment and U.S. and European foreign policy, neoliberal reforms have been aggressively promoted in a wide range of countries around the world. The stated aim of neoliberal economic and political reforms has been to facilitate a country's integration into

processes of globalization. Through market liberalization and deregulation alongside the dispersal of centralized government functions, proponents of neoliberalism promise a combination of economic growth and democratization that will filter down to all sectors of society. These reforms have very often been touted as a means to break the socioeconomic stranglehold of the traditional elite in developing countries through the introduction of market-driven equal opportunity (Comaroff and John L. eds Comaroff 2001; Fichtl 1999:17; Harvey 2005; Ugarteche 1999:22). Despite these leveling claims, critics of neoliberal policies point to a dramatic rise in inequality and a decline in living standards among most sectors in countries where free market reforms have been aggressively pursued (Huber and Solt 2004; Larrea and North 1997; Larrea 1998; Portes and Hoffman 2003). Furthermore, regional elites in these settings are often identified as the direct recipients of material and ideological benefits from the implementation of such reforms, either directly through favorable economic policies or indirectly through opportunities provided by the growth in civil society organizations emerging to meet needs resulting from the reduction of state-sponsored social supports and services (Gill 2000; Larrea and North 1997; North 2000; Orta 2004; Paley 2001).

My initial research into this topic suggested that despite dramatically changing Ecuadorian national circumstances, landed and formerly landed elites in the country were weathering these changes, and the basic contours of Ecuadorian social hierarchy remained intact (Conaghan 1988; Guerrero 1980; Hurtado 1980; Lane 2003; Stern 1999; North 2000; Whitten 2003b). My ethnographic field research thus began with questions about the strategies that traditional hacendado elites employ to reproduce their status and social privilege in an environment of neoliberal volatility and unease. My research revealed that traditional hacendado elites are indeed reproducing their status within these new conditions and deploying novel tactics

in the process that are responsive to Ecuador's deepening integration in the global economy. However, the results of my ethnographic investigation demonstrate that traditional hacendado elite resilience in the contemporary moment represents just the latest chapter of a long history of reproducing privilege in times marked by tremendous change and instability. In fact, traditional hacendado elites in Ecuador have been producing hacendado status through literal and symbolic consumption of the hacienda for centuries, creatively adapting to new conditions and looming threats.

Traditional hacendado elites in Ecuador have a very long history of withstanding transformations in the country, including threats from colonial powers, elite diversification, agrarian restructuring, economic booms and busts, growing indigenous social movements and the emergence of newly wealthy Ecuadorians who may not share the same goals for national development and the terms of legitimate culture. This dissertation is an ethnography of the reproduction of Ecuadorian traditional hacendado elite status and privilege in a time of change and transformation. While the contemporary moment is characterized by insecurity, traditional hacendado elites continue to be better positioned than most Ecuadorians to respond to challenges emerging from new socioeconomic conditions. Like other elites throughout the world, my consultants must constantly negotiate the terms of their privilege and status in conversation with non-elite populations (Bourdieu 1984; Gramsci 1971; Marcus 1983; Shore and Nugent 2002; Wolf 2001). Traditional hacendado elites actively reproduce their positions of privilege through cultural and political work required in ongoing negotiations about their status and distinction within the wider society.

My research intends to expand scholarly analyses of Ecuadorian social hierarchy by focusing on the top of the metaphorical pyramid of social relations described above and by

seeking a greater understanding of the diversity and complexities that characterize the elite social sector in Ecuador. I approach this topic from the perspective of multiple generations of traditional hacendado elite families, referred to as *las familias tradicionales*, La Sociedad, and *las buenas familias* by the consultants with whom I worked and played and generally annoyed with my incessant questions and seemingly constant breaches of accepted social etiquette. For the purpose of this dissertation, I use the term “traditional hacendado elite” to refer to “landed elite” (and formerly landed elite) families in the Andean highlands who primarily trace their descent back to the colonial Spaniards (*Peninsulares* and *Criollos*) who monopolized vast tracts of lands and the enormous pool of indigenous labor in the Andean highlands. My study examines the quotidian forms of traditional hacendado elite resistance to social change in Ecuador. I document their responses to these challenges and detail how these unsettled elites are uniquely positioned to create new opportunities for themselves in the context of global capitalism while simultaneously drawing on bases of privilege that derive from colonialism. Following Pierre Bourdieu (1984), I consider how the types and amount of capital they possess, especially economic and cultural capital, affect my consultants’ social class position.

However ambivalent my consultants may seem to be about their relationship to colonial history in Ecuador, the ongoing link to Spanish colonialism is an important marker of traditional hacendado elite status in the contemporary period and a signal to others of one’s membership in the small and insular social milieu of Ecuadorian elites. Genealogy demonstrates the possession of incorporated cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 2001) and signals intrinsic qualities associated with “good breeding” that distinguish them from other non-elite Ecuadorians. Ancestry that connects traditional hacendado elites to Europe by way of Spanish colonialism also serves the purpose of underscoring my consultants’ social and biological “whiteness,” an

essential characteristic that highlights their civility, modernity and sense of honor in contrast to other Ecuadorians, especially mestizos with increasing economic capital. Reproduction of traditional hacendado elite status in Andean Ecuador also relies on the continuation of implicit social norms about acceptable marriage partners. I argue that these echoes of the colonial in the present do not necessarily represent legacies that defy the multitude of transformational forces characteristic of the modern period. Instead, they reflect creative reconstructions and reinventions explicitly responsive to postcolonial dictates of global modernity (Lane 2003; Orta 2004; Stern 1999; Whitten 1981a; Whitten 2003a).

Recognizing the relational nature of social class and hierarchy, I also consider how traditional hacendado elite status and distinction is constructed through daily practice and discourse (Bourdieu 1984) and I explore the symbolic and material markers of distinction that characterize this social class. Following Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, I examine the ways in which shared lifestyles and practices among my consultants reflect an underlying logic of inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu 1984:169–197; Bourdieu 1987:5; Weber 1958:187–190). These shared ideas and practices define one’s sense of place and the place of others, while also differentiating between socially sanctioned relationships and those that are “out of place” and virtually unthinkable (Bourdieu 1987:5; Goldstein 2003:81; Joppke 1986:27; Whitten and Torres 1998:22–23). The lived experiences of traditional hacendado elites shed light on the material, ideational and discursive daily practices that facilitate the reconstitution of power, privilege and domination in rapidly changing contexts of globalization.

Disenchantment with the contemporary expression of modernity in Ecuador and its many contradictions has catalyzed powerful forms of contrastructural resistance to “common sense” ideas about the naturalness of social boundaries in the Ecuadorian nation. At the same time, my



research illustrates that traditional hacendado elite individuals and families deploy many strategies to vigorously resist any potential downward slide on the social ladder as well as challengers who threaten their privileged position as the possessors of legitimate culture (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1990). This entails struggles over symbolic capital – the forms and distributions of economic, cultural and social capital perceived and acknowledged as legitimate in society. When faced with the rise of newly wealthy and internationally connected populations whose growing economic capital could potentially change the terms of accepted legitimate culture in Ecuadorian society, my traditional hacendado elite consultants draw on long-standing ideologies of social difference to protect the borders of their social group. They repackage these colonial ideas within the discourse of advanced capitalism and its promise of social mobility through education. Recognizing that the realm of education acts as the main battlefield of class struggle in complex societies (Bourdieu 1977), some traditional hacendado elites strive to capitalize on the promise of social mobility through education and the acquisition of credentials while simultaneously imposing this field’s symbolic limits by reinforcing ideals of “social whiteness” in Ecuador. Education may be the medicine that the country needs for economic development and progress, but possession of “*educación*” – the essential and intrinsic characteristics that one inherits through good breeding – is the true conveyor of elite status in Ecuador.

Traditional hacendado elites selectively use their ancestral links to Spanish colonialism in efforts to capitalize on opportunities in the changing environment. They are able to reposition themselves favorably within national and global spheres of social hierarchy by drawing on bases of privilege deriving from colonialism while also incorporating newly available forms of non-traditional power and prestige. My ethnographic research illustrates this process with an

examination of modern, capitalistic enterprises recently implemented on historic family hacienda landholdings. These ventures on family haciendas exemplify contemporary elite efforts to rearticulate historical social class relations and divisions in Ecuador by selectively adapting creative reconstructions of colonial ideals to the requirements of global capitalist modernity. A new generation of western-educated hacendados who seek to turn haciendas into bona fide *empresas* (businesses) is striving to model these enterprises after idealized capitalist workplace environments that are unencumbered by historical social relations based on mutually agreed upon obligations to families, workers and surrounding communities. Ironically, the success of many of these ventures is tied to efforts to rationalize the historically paternalistic figure of the hacendado patrón according to modern capitalistic businesses principles, while also marketing a softer, sanitized version of this figure and the previous state of the hacienda as exotic products that sell in the global market.

### **Notes on Fieldwork and Method**

My focus on traditional hacendado elites in Ecuador was informed by a strand of North American anthropology, stretching back for more than three decades, that recognizes the importance of examining the agents of power in order to understand broader processes of social change and continuity (Marcus 1983; Nader 1974; Orta 2002; Wolf 1969; Wolf 1999; Wolf 2001). Such work has challenged anthropologists to explicate the workings of power by paying close ethnographic attention to the ways in which power is constructed, made meaningful and reproduced in social contexts. Considering these processes through an ethnographic lens provides insight into the relational and contingent nature of power in complex society by focusing on how elites construct and reproduce their status and positions of privilege through daily social practices and participation in cultural institutions.

## Methodological Approach

I carried out 16 months of ethnographic field research in and around Quito, Ecuador, with the members of approximately 15 current and past landowning elite families with close familial and social ties to one another. Geographically, I split my time between my consultants' residences and businesses in urban Quito (and the surrounding suburban valleys) and their rural haciendas. Tracking the strategies deployed and negotiations made by these elite individuals as they moved between their urban and rural lifestyles was to be crucial to my examination of elite status construction, maintenance and reproduction in rapidly transforming social environments.

In Quito, I was an active participant-observer at many of my consultants' life cycle, social, religious and cultural events, including rather mundane activities such as shopping and watching my consultants' favorite telenovelas. Many afternoons were spent with consultants talking over lunches that consisted of multiple courses and lasted for several hours. I also worked in the urban offices of family businesses as a volunteer and met with leaders at elite educational institutions on a regular basis. Participation in my consultants' daily activities in urban settings provided insight into how traditional elite social networks and markers of status are constructed, used, abandoned or transformed through interactions with other elite and non-elite actors.

Changing social circumstances also have implications across the Andean countryside. Field research at rural hacienda sites provided opportunities to observe contemporary traditional hacendado elites within the context of a setting that has been a key site of their identity formation throughout much of Ecuadorian history. I participated in the annual cycle of production activities and rituals located on family haciendas. These included activities associated with family-run hacienda tourism businesses catering to international and national tourists. Fieldwork

at these rural sites provided insight into the shifting strategies and positions of my traditional hacendado elite consultants, as well as their changing relations with indigenous and mestizo workers on the haciendas and in the surrounding communities.

My work with extended families enabled me to take an historical, multi-generational approach to compare how elite experiences, strategies and opportunities have changed over time. Research with newspaper archives and private family collections allowed me to trace changing social networks among elites as well as changing markers of elite status. Existing literature on Ecuadorian social relations portrays elite hacendado status as based (ideally) on unbroken genealogical ties that can be traced back to European origins and are maintained through a fairly strict form of marriage endogamy (Brownrigg 1972; Casagrande 1971; Gilbert 1981; Hurtado 1980; Whitten 1981a). I was able to systematically examine this facet of traditional hacendado elite status and privilege through access to private records and detailed genealogical information maintained by families.

Throughout my field research, I conducted open-ended interviews with my consultants to establish increased rapport and to identify topics for more systematic exploration in the course of the research. I initiated my extended fieldwork with a core group of consultants from four related families with whom I had been cultivating personal relationships over the course of several years, first as a tourist who unknowingly wandered onto a family hacienda and later as a friend/researcher seeking to understand the lived experiences that facilitated their development of hacienda tourism ventures. Additional consultants were identified through snowball sampling, usually based on recommendations received from other consultants who paved my way with initial introductions to signal my “vetting.”

Extended informal conversations with key consultants was very important throughout the course of the project, providing additional insight into the ways in which elites reflect on their own experiences and social roles and how they construct their identities in the course of daily practice and in relation to transformations underway in the wider society. I also conducted formal, taped semi-structured interviews focusing on land tenure, social history, genealogies and family, social, educational and professional network relationships to investigate the changing tactics deployed by traditional Andean elites to reproduce their privilege. Occasionally, consultants requested that formal interviews proceed without taping, and I always complied, relying instead on copious handwritten notes that I transformed into interview records immediately following our meeting. Thus, some of the “quotes” that are contained in this dissertation are derived from these handwritten notes and interview records versus complete interview transcriptions of recordings.

Language is an important aspect of traditional hacendado elite distinction. In particular, fluency in multiple languages – especially English – marks my consultants’ elite status as well-traveled cosmopolitans and their possession of both educational credentials (institutionalized cultural capital) and educación (incorporated cultural capital). Therefore, formal and informal interviews were often conducted in English and sometimes in Spanish. More accurately, informal conversations and formal interviews almost always contain elements of both English and Spanish languages. Code-switching was a regular occurrence during interviews and in daily practice. Therefore, I have maintained this convention in the quotations included throughout the dissertation.

Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of my consultants is a tricky endeavor as their contemporary status and distinction is in some ways directly related to the notoriety of their

family names and histories. Their social circle is small and therefore easily recognizable to one another. Much of the information they shared with me was sensitive and revealed concerns about how they are viewed by the public and the government. Therefore, I adopted multiple approaches to address concerns about anonymity and confidentiality. First, with the exception of public figures like former president Galo Plaza Lasso, I assigned pseudonyms to all of my consultants as well as the names of their friends and acquaintances who are mentioned in the text but did not actively participate in this research. Second, some of the consultants described in the text actually represent composites composed of several individuals.

Methodological Considerations in Research with Elites (Up the Anthropologist, or Up Yours, Anthropologist?)

Despite an overarching interest within North American anthropology in the interrogation of power, anthropologists still sometimes view ethnographic research with elites negatively or at least with a hefty dose of skepticism. George Marcus (1983:23) posited that the polemical atmosphere surrounding elite research in Western liberal society creates special problems for ethnographers because they and their work are likely to be tagged as either “elitist” or “anti-elitist.” I and my work have encountered both reactions. For example, several of my graduate school colleagues scoffed at my research topic and field site, commenting that research about elites is hardly important in the world and does not conform to typical visions of ethnographic field work in exotic places with interesting people who have unique cultural lifeways. Similarly, an esteemed scholar at my university asked me during a panel interview for grant funding to justify my perceived abandonment of the anthropological dictum of “giving voice to the voiceless.” Another professor confronted me at a professional conference to suggest that my work would contribute to “problems in Latin America” by focusing attention on the very people

responsible for those problems. Setting aside the obviously narrow and privileged view of anthropological fieldwork and the power of ethnography in the contemporary moment contained in those sentiments (Rose 1996:107), I argue that research about elites and their daily struggles to reproduce social hierarchies based on structured domination are more relevant than ever today for those who seek to understand the ways in which power is produced at the local level as well as how global processes may contribute to ongoing inequities. Understanding how social actors construct power through quotidian practices and participation in cultural institutions may help reframe scholarly and public debates about the role of structure and agency in meaningful social change.

On a more personal note, working with people whose identities are in some ways dependent on keeping people on the outside of their insular social circle can be lonely during good days and downright demoralizing on bad days. No amount of cachet that I may have accrued as a highly educated white gringa straight from the United States with a prestigious research fellowship and some good friends in the “right” places obscured the fact that I was not and never will be truly one of them. For every party, social event or family gathering that I attended, there were likely at least two others more exclusive and private to which I was not invited. My position as a researcher and as a person was liminal – some days on the inside and others stuck on the precipice between in and out. In fact, this sort of positioning that keeps others on the periphery is a crucial strategy in efforts to maintain the social boundaries between my consultants and “others,” broadly defined. Such tactics of exclusion are not unique to Ecuador or ethnographic research with elites. However, my liminal position and glaring “outsider” status did at times complicate my research with individuals who were suspicious about my intentions or just uncomfortable with the notion that elites might be subject to the

anthropological gaze. Gossip about my suspected intentions and use of my consultants as “*cuy*” (guinea pigs) seemed to be always nipping at my heels, threatening to resolve the dilemma of liminality by permanently pushing me off the precipice. Admittedly, I occasionally sought out the liminal position as a form of respite from uncomfortable conversations, strategic exclusions and social manipulations – a few of the tools that my consultants wielded in their tireless work to construct and fortify the borders between inclusion and exclusion.

## **Overview of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of an Introduction, five chapters and a brief conclusion. This Introduction describes the focus of my investigation and my research questions, introduces my field site and research consultants and details my methodological approach.

The first two chapters of the dissertation interrogate the historical context of traditional hacendado elite status and distinction in Ecuador. Both chapters address the waxing and waning of traditional hacendado elite privilege over time and in relation to broader economic, political and social changes in the country. Chapter One considers the historical development of the landed elite in Andean Ecuador, paying particular attention to their association with the possession of landed property in the form of haciendas, racialized forms of social prestige that define the standards for national cultural norms of status and taste and political-economic power in the country. Chapter Two examines multiple forces of change that have in recent decades coalesced to challenge the dominance of all factions of the traditional landowning elite class, but especially the highland hacendado elite among whom I lived and worked in Ecuador. This chapter also considers how traditional hacendado elites have responded historically to economic transformations, agrarian reforms, the consolidation of regional and national indigenous movements and the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Ecuador.



Chapters Three, Four and Five focus on the strategies utilized by traditional hacendado elites to reposition themselves and reproduce their status and distinction amidst contemporary transformations and instability. Chapter Three examines traditional hacendado elite markers of distinction and refinement. With an ethnographic focus on symbols of traditional hacendado elite inclusion, I explore the multiple facets of distinction that set these individuals and families apart from other elite factions and the rest of Ecuadorian society. To this end, I examine the long-standing markers of traditional hacendado elite distinction that signify important, and contested, social boundaries. I consider the practices and classificatory schemes that enable traditional hacendado elites to recognize other members of this faction of elites amidst the vast *mezcla* of elites that inhabit the “upper class” in highland Ecuador, as well as an emerging class of newly wealthy Ecuadorians (*nuevos ricos*) whose “sense of place” and sensibilities appears to share more in common with the popular masses than elites.

Chapter Four considers hacendado reactions to the rise of neoliberal elites as a violation of longstanding social boundaries distinguishing “civilized” elite lifeways from those of the newly wealthy and popular masses in Ecuador. I consider how neoliberal and nationalist elite discourses about the transformative power of education and the possession of educational credentials for social mobility are tempered by the reassertion of the primacy of forms of comportment, customs and styles of life held to define traditional hacendado elite “distinction.” The tensions and contradictions inherent in this process illuminate neoliberal capitalism’s false promise of equal opportunity and its illusory space of participation.

Chapter Five focuses on elite family projects aimed at modernizing and revitalizing landed wealth in the form of highland haciendas in novel ways that correspond with global economic conditions and embrace neoliberal business models. I examine business ventures

linked to hacienda tourism that serve to re-articulate historical and racialized social class relations in Ecuador while also revealing a particularly modern irony: literally performing pre-capitalist hacienda social relations for consumption by modern international and (increasingly) national tourists.

Finally, in a brief Conclusion, I summarize my arguments, outline broader implications and questions arising from my research and speculate on my consultants' continuing struggle to reproduce their status and privilege by consuming the hacienda in the ever-changing landscape of Andean Ecuador.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF HACENDADO PRIVILEGE

### The Genealogy of Ecuadorian Traditional Hacendado Elite Distinction

Ecuadorian social hierarchy historically has been characterized by the monopolization of political, economic and social power by a closely-knit core of regional elite families from the Andean capital city of Quito and the coastal city of Guayaquil. These elite families are often further differentiated along the lines of old wealth, power, and prestige (*gente de bien* or La Sociedad) and achieved position in terms of new wealth and political position (Whitten 2003b:55; Whitten 2003c:23). The focus of this dissertation is the “traditional hacendado elite” social sector located in Andean Ecuador.

I use “traditional hacendado elite” to refer to the “landed elite” (and formerly landed elite) in the Andean highlands who trace their descent back to the colonial Spaniards (Peninsulares and Criollo) who monopolized vast tracts of lands and the enormous pool of indigenous labor in the Andean highlands. These large landowners, or *hacendados*, have long been iconic figures on the Ecuadorian social landscape bringing to mind both the Spanish colonial past and the process of Criollo independence and nation building. By and large, hacendado landowners have been overwhelmingly politically and economically conservative and staunchly Catholic. Over the years, this has often been expressed through a deep skepticism of economic liberalism, a position that sharply contrasts with their overtly capitalistic coastal counterparts in Guayaquil. To many, hacendado elites embody a regressive force that has served to stunt and resist budding social transformations in the postcolonial nation-state. At the same time, hacendado families have been representative of the enduring close association in Ecuador between the possession of landed property in the form of haciendas, racialized forms of social

prestige that define the standards for national cultural norms of status and taste and political-economic power. This chapter explores the ways in which this historical association is also a function of the “whiteness” of the traditional hacendado elite in Ecuador, a marker which symbolically and materially connects these individuals and families to high status, power, wealth, civilized culture, urbanity and progress.

A primary goal of this chapter is to chart the genealogy of traditional hacendado elite distinction and status in Andean Ecuador. Since the beginning of Spanish colonialism in South America, the social influence and dominance of this sector of elites has been dependent on their ability to generate and monopolize wealth in the New World through the exploitation and expropriation of indigenous and African labor, practices which only intensified in the post-independence period. As a result, the historical development of traditional hacendado elite status and privilege in Andean Ecuador cannot be disentangled from two other epic and intertwined narratives -- the stories of capitalism and colonialism.

This chapter considers the many ways that forms of colonial ethnoracial social hierarchy inherited from medieval Europe were adapted to the material and ideational needs of an emerging modernity in the New World. Beginning with Spanish colonialism in the Audencia of Quito in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and moving through roughly the first century of the Ecuadorian republic, I examine this process as it was intimately tied to the many political and economic transformations associated with the development of global capitalism. In Andean Ecuador, this relationship provided the foundation upon which colonial Spaniards and their Criollo descendants were able to effect and justify their social, economic and to some degree, political dominance in pre- and post-Independence Ecuador. The dialectical relationship between an ethnoracial social hierarchy premised on a combination of faith-based and science-based regimes

of knowledge (de la Cadena 2005:268; Weismantel and Eisenman 1998:124–126) and the emerging capitalist world-economy also fostered the rise of the hacienda complex, in which most traditional elite families played pivotal roles as hacendados and *hacendadas*. The ongoing reproduction of this social formation in Andean Ecuador reaffirmed the traditional elites' place at the pinnacle of Ecuadorian social hierarchy on the basis of their perceived superior European "whiteness." In so doing, the hacienda social formation also underscores the antagonistic social relationships at the core of both colonial political economic exploitation and modern relations of domination and hegemony.

The remainder of this dissertation illustrates the ways in which this history continues to inform the present in Andean Ecuador. I do this by exploring the changing meanings, significance and uses of the ambiguous legacies and behavioral habits deriving from the history presented in this chapter as contemporary hacendado elites strive to reproduce their status in shifting national and transnational fields of power and privilege. In this process, these and other elite sectors in Ecuador must constantly navigate a wide range of tensions and anxieties as they attempt to negotiate their subjective positions in relation to both the wider national society and to Europe as well as the place of their postcolonial nation within the modern world system.<sup>1</sup> Thus,

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<sup>1</sup> Although never explicitly articulated as an explanation of their disdain for "*los españoles*," my Western-educated elite consultants are fully versed in academic and political discourses that mark Spain and its form of colonialism as "exceptional" in relation to the later, "modern" colonialisms of Britain and France. The "exceptionalism" attributed to Spanish colonialism in Spanish America has been linked to the perceived lack of modernity in the Spanish world. In this line of thought, the Spanish colonial experience in the New World is considered an "old colonialism" that was shaped by feudalistic social, political, and economic relations. This is set against the "new colonialism" of 19th century British and French imperialisms that reflected newly emerging expressions of power associated with northwestern European modernity (Klor de Alva 1992; Thurner 2003). In effect, Spain's "exceptionalism" came about in conversation with the rise of "Occidentalism," a discursive and justificatory strategy wherein modernity and civilization are understood solely as the products of northwestern European Enlightenment reason, and Latin America is consistently depicted as the primitive Other to Europe's modern Self (Coronil 1996). As Mark Thurner has noted, this discourse of exceptionalism marks Spain as the "backward sister of Europe" and her colonies "a bastard progeny" (2003:21). Such lines of thought reflect the continuing hegemony of a particular form of Eurocentrism that paints its self-professed superiority in broad strokes of racialized rationality and allusions to the burdens and promise of the global civilizing missions of modernity.

my self-professed “modern” and “progressive” elite consultants in Ecuador find themselves drawing on their ancestral connections to Europe by way of Spain and Spanish colonialism as important markers of their elite distinction. The intrinsic qualities and sensibilities that are linked to these real and imagined blood lines mark off the boundaries between traditional hacendado elites, other elite factions and, most of all, members of “*el pueblo*.” At the same time, their oft-expressed disdain for “*los Españoles*” belies a profound ambivalence about the ancestral legacies that are the basis of the present chapter and the ways in which these legacies have contributed to the marginal positioning of their social group and the nation-state in the contemporary period.

### **A Postcolonial Tale of Three -isms**

The history of the rise of hacendado elite dominance in Ecuador demonstrates how “modern” understandings of capitalism as a dominant mode of production and “race” and racialized systems of social hierarchy cannot be disentangled or separated from the colonial experience. Indeed, numerous scholars have argued that the shape of colonial capitalism as practiced first in Spanish America and later led by British and French imperialisms – exploitative, non-sustainable, and fueled by slave labor in the Caribbean and North American colonies and conscripted indigenous labor in Latin America – is actually constitutive of capitalism as a whole (Mintz 1985; Mignolo 2000; Ashcroft 1999; Wallerstein 1974).

As a concept, the term “modern” in typical usage has its roots in European intellectual life in the 18th and early 19th centuries and is commonly associated with Enlightenment ideals and the capitalist economic formations of the “industrial revolution.” According to Enlightenment philosophical thought, the modern era is characterized by reason and rationality, as opposed to the “premodern” feudal world’s “irrational” emphasis on faith, religiosity and

absolutism. However, in this dissertation I use the terms “modernity” and “modern” to reference a process of radical global economic and social transformations, the origins of which can be traced to the 15th century age of European expansion (Ashcroft 1999:18; Silverblatt 2004). By bracketing the modern and ideas about the formations of modernity in this way, my intention is to emphasize the role of capitalist economic relations characterizing the “modern world system” (Wallerstein 1974) in the development of European modernity. Such an emphasis entails a focus on the Spanish imperial and colonial processes of 15th and 16th century European exploration, and the interplay between colonial systems of exploitation and subjugation, Enlightenment ideologies (i.e., the rationalized extension and intensification of pre-Enlightenment processes of Othering) and the eventual rise of nationalist sentiment and political structuring. This view draws an explicit link between the emergence of modernity and processes of imperial conquest and colonialism which were fundamentally motivated by political economic goals, even when cloaked in the discourse of evangelization.

During the 15th century, Europe was only a minor player in the vast and extensive trade routes that connected the areas of the world that have come to be known as Asia, India, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe. In fact, the search for new and quicker trade routes in the context of the emerging modern world system was a central goal of Spanish and Portuguese explorations of the 15th and 16th centuries. The expansion of Europe’s role in global trade that took place as a result of exploration, and the eventual conquest of the New World gave rise to an expanding merchant class of commoners who came to see themselves as a distinct class with its own interests (as differentiated from those of the ruling class of aristocrats and rural peasants) (Wallerstein 1974). From these mutually constitutive processes of exploration and expansion,

the modern world system based on a capitalist world-economy first took shape in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) provided the first cogent analysis of this world system with his historical account of the origins and development of the modern European capitalist “world-economy.” According to Wallerstein, every society since the 16th century has been affected by and is part of the capitalist world economy. One of the most important contributions of Wallerstein’s work is located in his theory of the hierarchy of nation-states and the concomitant international division of labor that is characteristic of the capitalist world economy. Wallerstein proposed that the world-system is made up of core states, periphery states, and semi-periphery states<sup>2</sup> (Wallerstein 1974). The “core” of the modern world system has to this point been associated with northwestern Europe and the United States and their position in it most often justified in terms of self-evident superiority and embodiment of Enlightenment ideals of rationality and progress. However, Wallerstein’s “world systems theory” demonstrates that the development of the capitalist “core” is actually a function of a series of historical conjunctures and contingencies, including the age of explorations and the establishment of New World colonialism. Wallerstein highlights the exploitative nature of global capitalism by examining macro-level social relations that give form to the international division of labor. His analysis shows that Latin American economies and societies have always been fully part of the capitalist world system and decisively not representative of an earlier stage in the transition to industrial capitalism (Ashcroft 1999:20; Wallerstein 1974). According to a world systems analysis, the “underdevelopment” so often associated with Latin American economies is the product of their

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<sup>2</sup> According to Wallerstein (1974), core-states correspond to advantaged areas of the world economy. Low-wage and coerced forms of labor are extracted from the peripheral states, which also tend to have weaker states. Finally, there is the “semi-periphery,” which Wallerstein pinpoints as crucial to the maintenance of the system because these areas serve as collection points for vital skills that are often politically unpopular.



“peripheral” role in the hierarchically arranged capitalist world system, a role that has been vital to the development of European capitalist modernity.

Bill Ashcroft has noted that the imperialism of the capitalist system maintains its energy through the same kinds of rhetoric of exclusion that drove the Spanish imperial project (1999:20). The exclusions that Ashcroft and other scholars (Mignolo 2000; Mintz 1985) allude to are the exploitative relations of power at the root of modernity, despite the espousal of Enlightenment ideals related to universalism and individual freedoms. The work of social theorists such as Wallerstein, Ashcroft, Mignolo, Mintz and others make a strong case for the recasting of Europe’s capitalist modernity in terms of the history and legacy of exploitative colonial relations of power, rather than as a reflection of the ultimate realization of Enlightenment ideals of reason, progress and universalism. This scholarship also underscores the importance of examinations into how the coordination of capitalist economic transformation with modern ideological systems has underwritten exploitative relations of power in the Americas. In colonial Spanish America, the rationalized extension and intensification of pre-Enlightenment processes of Othering were used to justify and legitimize the antagonistic social relationships at the core of both colonial political economic exploitation and modern systems of domination and subjection. Such antagonistic relationships based on difference continue to undergird and animate traditional elite status and distinction in contemporary Andean Ecuador. As Mary J. Weismantel (1988:159) has noted in relation to the resilience of Ecuadorian social divisions marked by conceptions of racial difference, “...despite the radical changes in economy and society that historical process has created, changes that have altered the content of “Indian” and “white” practice beyond recognition, the boundary between them has constantly been reproduced.”

## **Empire and its Racialized Other**

Modernity as a social formation is incomprehensible without reference to the historical constitution of race within the asymmetrical structures of colonial experience. Hannah Arendt (1973) offers a compelling and sobering analysis of the relationship between racism, colonialism and modernity. She argues that racial ideologies emerging from global imperial rule during the 19th century transformed colonial bureaucrats into members of a superior caste. Arendt points to the destructive power of racialized bureaucracy that is veiled by modern notions of “rationality” and “civilization.” In turn, these became linked to a view of the emerging modern state as a neutral representative of “the public” and the “common good” (Silverblatt 2004:10). The coupling of race thinking and bureaucratic state rule is capable of immense power and destruction precisely because it is veiled by an aura of neutrality and rationality associated with the “idea of the state” (Abrams 1977). Philip Abrams contends that the “idea of the state” functions ideologically to legitimize politically organized subjection and moral regulation imposed by dominant groups. State projects of legitimation and moral regulation steer the process of normalization by making the historically constituted social categories that organize power appear to be essential and intrinsic to social life. As a result, multiple structures of inequality articulated through state systems and their constructed categories of social control become naturalized by way of race thinking (Abrams 1977; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Silverblatt 2004:12).

Following Hannah Arendt (1973) and, more recently, Irene Silverblatt (2004), I use the term “race thinking” to denote “any mode of construing and engaging social hierarchies through the lens of descent” (Silverblatt 2004:17–18). The concept of “race thinking,” as a mode of understanding and being in the world points attention to the ways in which descent-based

hierarchy is inextricably linked to the mutual interpenetration of “other expressions of power” and “other forms of social antagonisms” through time (Silverblatt 2004:18). I argue that colonial caste and modern race represent two interpenetrating modes of organizing and explaining inequality in an evolving global context of political economic domination and social control, rather than completely separate and unrelated systems that signal a substantive break delineating “traditional” social relations from “modern” regimes of power. While race thinking marks individuals within social hierarchies according to descent and irreducible difference, it does so by simultaneously obscuring the (antagonistic) social relations at the heart of their historical construction – specifically the social relations of colonialism, bureaucratic state formation and capitalist development.

While in agreement with Arendt regarding the destructive relationship binding together racism, colonialism and modernity, Irene Silverblatt traces the beginnings of modernity to the initial moments of 16th century state-making and the efforts of European monarchs to simultaneously extend their power and consolidate their victories through global imperialism (2004:4). The initial moments of modern state-making through bureaucratic rule can be traced back to the institution of the Toledan Reforms<sup>3</sup> in Spanish America during the 16th century. At

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<sup>3</sup> Initiated by the Spanish monarchy during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Toledan Reforms represent a very early attempt on the part of the colonial state to make Spanish colonial society more legible through the amplified use of simplifications that took the form of dual republics and indigenous *reducciones* (Spalding 1984:158). The state process of simplification has been described by James Scott (1998) as a central goal of modern statecraft intent on more effectively administering and surveilling populations. The Spanish Crown used the application of state bureaucracies as instruments of social control and in the initiation of modern race thinking in the establishment of a separate “*indio*” republic distinct from white *español* society and subject to different obligations and responsibilities. The establishment of indigenous *reducciones* entailed the massive resettlement of indigenous groups into model townships with the explicit goal of greater control, assessment, and surveillance of the indigenous population (Spalding 1984:156–159). These reforms created a network of colonial administrators (*corregidores*) who mediated between *encomenderos* and the indigenous people assigned to them. These administrators represented a layer of Crown oversight by exerting state control over the surplus that *encomenderos* obtained from their “*indios*” (Spalding 1984:162). These strategies and practices of the 16th century colonial state provide very early examples of modern rule through “governmentality” (Foucault 1991) and the implementation of modern statecraft (Scott 1998).

the core of these processes, for which Spain served as a prototype that informed later colonial projects, economics and politics were paramount among imperial concerns, and race thinking functioned to naturalize the asymmetrical relations of power and exploitation that guaranteed the extraction of surpluses for the benefit of the Spanish settlers as well as the Spanish monarchy. Irene Silverblatt has noted, “It was the modern world’s signature to etch economic dominance and political supremacy into a radical cultural design. It was also its signature to hide the social relations that were brewing supremacy and conflict behind a semblance of ‘race things’” (2004:5). In this sense, early Spanish colonialism has the dubious distinction of setting into motion the creation of the modern world and its peculiar, but not altogether unfamiliar, form of naturalized domination.

In effect, Spain’s South American colonial society represented the “early modern” training ground for “high modern” forms of state rule and domination emphasizing bureaucratic power and racialized systems of stratification in the global political economy of capitalism. From this perspective, the origins of race lie in history and not in biology, which is to say that “races” are socially constructed in order to displace systematically the causes of oppression onto victims (Weismantel and Eisenman 1998:122). This historical view approaches the construction of race and racism as modern ideologies of oppression that were set in motion with the convergence of the formation of a capitalist culture in Europe and the conquest of the Americas. According to Samir Amin, this convergence resulted in the development among Europeans of a “sense of absolute superiority” and also propelled the continuing discourse of empire and expansion of the capitalist mode of production (1989:72–73). The sense of absolute superiority stemming from the experience of difference was put to work as colonial racism in Spanish America (Ashcroft 1999:17; Pratt 1992:32). It was, and continues to be, characterized by a

profound contradiction wherein claims are made regarding the unique superiority of white, European, Christian and civilized bodies over non-white peoples and cultures, while also asserting the naturalness and universality of Western bodies, religious thought and practice and political economic organization and practice (de la Cadena 2000:48; de la Cadena 2005:262; Weismantel and Eisenman 1998:124).<sup>4</sup>

### **Conquerors and Conquered, Christians and Pagans: Introducing Colonial Hierarchy**

Major transformations occurring in Europe within both material and symbolic realms played significant roles in shaping the processes of contact, exploration, colonialism, and eventually, the rise of independent nation-states in Spanish America. At the time of Columbus' notorious voyage, Christianity was gaining a significant sociopolitical stronghold in Europe. The late 15th century was a time of intense ethnic cleansing that was intimately related to religion, with the Spanish Reconquest and incorporation of Muslim Granada and the expulsion of the Jews from what became completely Christian territory (Mörner 1967:13; Trouillot 1991:30; Trouillot 1995:74). These victories were significant in that the resultant consolidation of Christian political boundaries, as well as political power, made it possible for the European monarchies to allocate resources to exploration and expansion (Trouillot 1991:30–31). In addition, European devaluation based on skin color had been set in motion during armed conflict between Christians and the Moors during the late Middle Ages and the resulting negative connotations associated with “blackness” facilitated the importation of enslaved Africans to the colonial plantations of the New World. This colonial ontology served as a logical and familiar

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<sup>4</sup> Partha Chatterjee (1993) has described a similar process of Othering in the context of 19th century British colonialism in India, which he describes as “the rule of colonial difference.” But the seeds of this ideology of superiority based on absolute difference were sown much earlier in premodern Europe and took shape as colonial racism during three centuries of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas.

frame of reference for the structural system of colonial power instituted in the Americas and the religious fervor that fueled ethnic clashes in Europe found fertile ground for expression in the establishment of New World colonies.

The peoples who Europeans encountered in the Americas represented a wide range of social organizations, settlement patterns, and belief systems. What they had in common, however, from the perspective of the Spaniard conquistadors and settlers, was a profound “Otherness” that existed at the distant margins of European epistemologies of the time. This “Otherness” soon came into serious conversation with Renaissance philosophical thought concerning the nature of “Man.” Efforts to answer the philosophical question of “What is Man?” against a backdrop of colonial domination and subordination encouraged the robust development of a Western ontological order based on hierarchy (Trouillot 1995:75), and the question to be answered shifted to become “What is the ontological nature of conquered peoples?” While the answers to these queries granted a common humanity to indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans, most also held that there existed a hierarchy of humanity wherein some humans were more human than others (Pagden 1995; Socolow 1986:8; Trouillot 1995:76). Within this hierarchical scheme, native peoples of the Americas or Africa, while potentially redeemable through conversion, occupied the lowest rungs of the “ladder” (Trouillot 1995:73).

These ideas regarding degrees of humanity did not disappear with the onset of the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries and related processes of secularization. Despite an emphasis in Enlightenment intellectual thought on the universality of humanity in terms of the capacity for reason, this movement’s focus on rationality and the classification of the natural world injected additional life into existing systems of hierarchy and subordination, especially as religious differences were no longer sufficient to explain or legitimate social boundaries. Rather,

the Enlightenment's total dedication to scientific reason turned on itself, and rationalization became the basis for racialization and its eventual expression as racism in Europe and throughout the colonial system. Racism emerged as an Enlightenment extension of "premodern" ideas related to the ontological hierarchy of humanity (Weismantel and Eisenman 1998:124). The Spanish imposition of a colonial social organization based on the formation of a "*Sociedad de Castas*" (society of castas [or breeds]) illustrates the process within which this shift occurred. Over time, the Spanish colonial "society of castas" became solidly established, and colonial society grew increasingly more closed and stratified. It was within this colonial environment of increasing rigidity that the modern forms of race thinking that continue to act as the foundation of traditional elite status in Ecuador first began to take shape.

### **Colonial Castas: Social Hierarchy & Domination in Spanish South America**

By the 17th century, colonial society in Spanish South America had fully transitioned from a stratification system defined in terms of the distinction between conquerors and conquered to one based on corporate membership and race (Socolow 1986:14). Great inequalities of wealth and status were taken for granted and justified by the elite settlers as divinely ordained, socially useful and naturally in keeping with the human condition (Hoberman 1986:315; Mörner 1983:357; Socolow 1986:7). By this time, social stratification that was previously justified in terms of religious "difference" had shifted toward "race thinking" wherein difference, and the exploitation stemming from it, began to be interpreted as essential and natural and its historical association with economic and political relations of domination obscured. This shift was also linked to processes of secularization underway throughout Europe.

Race thinking is evident in the *Sociedad de Castas* implemented in colonial Spanish America as the basis for social stratification. The colonial society of castas in Spanish America

attempted to stratify the social order according to racial classifications that were based on mixture and degrees of whiteness (Lynch 1973:19; Mörner 1967:57–59; Pratt 1992:113). On the whole, the system entailed the classification of each member of the population as “español,” “indio,” “negro” or as a “casta” (a person of mixed racial ancestry) (Mörner 1967:56; Silverblatt 2004:17; Socolow 1986:7). The category “español” referenced all Spaniards, including both European immigrants (Peninsulares) and local-born Spaniards known as Creoles (Criollos). All Españoles were classified as “white” and occupied the upper stratum of society as a result of that classification and their lack of identification with “mixed” populations and/or indigenous or black populations (Mörner 1967:56). This distinction was based on the assumed and accepted superiority of Peninsulares and Criollos and intense disdain for mixed populations and other castas (de la Cadena 2005:2005; Mörner 1967:57). The system reflects settler connections to the pre-colonial Spanish obsession with purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*<sup>5</sup>) and represents one way that the legacy of Spain’s contact with Northern Africa played out in the Americas (de la Cadena 2005:265; Mörner 1967:54–55; Pratt 1992:111).

Each of the classified groups had associated rights, privileges, and obligations based on their racial origins (Hoberman 1986:315-316, Silverblatt 2004:5, Socolow 1986:7). “Indios” were subject to tribute payment and forced labor extractions. Indigenous populations were incorporated into colonial society as objects of exploitation and marginalization rather than as full members of society (Hurtado 1980:23). Free “negros” and persons belonging to a casta were subject to the payment of tribute and legally barred from holding any public office or joining an

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<sup>5</sup> “*Limpieza de sangre*” references a European medieval hierarchical classificatory concept that distinguished “old Christians” from “new Christians” and pagans following the Reconquest (*Reconquista*) of the Iberian Peninsula. “Old Christian” lineages were considered to be pure and untainted by any religious contamination, such as that resulting from the conversion of baptized Jews and Muslims and their descendants (cf. de la Cadena 2005, Mörner 1967, Silverblatt 2004).



artisan guild. Españoles, however, had no such obligations or restrictions, regardless of their social status and rank within the privileged sector of colonial society (Silverblatt 2004:5). While race classifications in the Spanish colonial society of castas were tied to economic considerations, they also served important symbolic purposes, as well. As Kris Lane has pointed out, enslavement, tribute payment, segregation, exclusion and compulsory labor service were punishments that functioned as “ritualized humiliations intentionally heaped upon ‘the conquered’ to remind them of their inferiority” (Lane 2003:90) and that inferiority was based on a subject’s presumed distance from pure “whiteness.”

The system of castas in colonial Spanish America has sometimes been described as a form of legal social classification based on ethnicity versus a biological race system. It is true that race in Spanish America has historically referenced social as well as physical attributes, and strict color-based hierarchies have not been the norm. However, casta categorizations in the Spanish colonies reflected race thinking by officially dividing people into highly essentialized categories of “español,” “indio,” or “negro” (Silverblatt 2004:18). Indigenous persons and persons of African descent were classed as “indio” or “negro,” regardless of origin or ethnicity, and the same is true for members of the intermediate categories, or castas. These categorizations functioned to reduce diverse indigenous and African-descended peoples and lifeways into single, legally binding and inferior categories in relation to the whiteness of Españoles (Lane 2003:89, Silverblatt 2004:18). As Weismantel and Eisenman have noted, “Ideologies of inequality that hold up whiteness as the norm are ideologies of race, even when cloaked in the language of ethnicity” (1998:123). These simplified categories were defined by the colonial state with the express purpose of administering and controlling defined “populations” (Silverblatt 2004:5). Colonial casta classifications very effectively obscured the fact that “indio,” “negro,” “español”

and “casta” all reflected historically and state-constituted social relations produced in the political and economic turmoil of colonialism rather than any essential characteristics or qualities.

Within the Sociedad de Castas, European immigrants and locally born Spaniards (Criollos) enjoyed positions of greater power and prestige in Spanish America based on their superior “whiteness,” which marked them as the bearers of culture and civilization. However, tensions existed within the racialized colonial category of “español” and not all “Spaniards” were considered equal (Silverblatt 2004:20). Although the category of “Spaniard” was used to denote the shared experience of all the colonizers, anxieties about race mixture were reflected in the distinction made between Peninsulares (Iberian-born Spaniards) and Criollos. Peninsulares were considered “pure whites” and superior to Criollos whose whiteness was “stained” as a result of its colonial origins (Anderson 1991:57–58; Hoberman 1986:319; Lynch 1973:19; Pratt 1992:112). The second-class status of Criollos in relation to Iberian-born Spaniards played out most clearly within the colonial state and had significant political economic ramifications. The Spanish monarchy tended to prefer peninsula-born Spaniards to Criollos in higher bureaucratic offices as well as participants in the trans-Atlantic system of commerce and trade (Lynch 1973:17, Pratt 1992:112). The social division between native-born elites and Iberian newcomers

at times was quite acrimonious and became even more so during the 18th century when immigration from Spain increased as a result of the Bourbon Reforms<sup>6</sup> (Socolow 1986:10).

Several scholars of Spanish colonialism have noted that while the Sociedad de Castas imposed a rigid form of social stratification in Spanish colonial society, there was always some room for individual negotiation in the system, especially within the elite sector during the final decades of the colonial period. The possibilities for mobility during this period stemmed from the commercialization of agriculture and ranching, a mining boom, freer trade, and the Bourbon Reforms (Hoberman 1986:316, Mörner 1967:66-67, Mörner 1983:347). As a result of all of these forces, merchants were increasingly accepted into the elite stratum of colonial society during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This process of upward mobility was often accomplished through alliances forged between wealthy merchants and landed and mining elites through intermarriage practices<sup>7</sup> (Hoberman 1986:321, Hurtado 1980:176, Mörner 1983:351). This upward mobility within elite ranks mirrors similar processes occurring in northwestern Europe with the turn toward modern forms of social organization.

The existence of elite mobility during the late colonial period, however, does not reflect a decline in racialized forms of marginalization and discriminations. In fact, it would seem to

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<sup>6</sup> Similar to the interventions of the 16th century Toledan Reforms, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bourbon Reforms were fundamentally a means of applying greater state control over colonial populations. Above all else, the Bourbon Reforms sought to strengthen already present conceptions of modern state rule that emphasized the institution of bureaucracies as instruments of social control. To this end, the Crown created new units of administration and new officials with the explicit intent of ending Creole autonomy (Lynch 1973:7). The Crown's use of bureaucracy to discipline and administer immigrant colonists and "conquered" populations had a long history in the Americas. Contrary to the rhetoric of "Spanish exceptionalism" that paints Spain and its former colonies as the "traditional" Other to northwestern European modernity, Spanish colonial and imperial ventures served as models, inspirations, and testing grounds for modes of social discipline that were imported back into Europe during the 18th century (Pratt 1992:36). As Irene Silverblatt (2004:4) noted recently, the Spanish colonial state, with its simplified classificatory system and bureaucratic modes of social discipline, consolidated state power in ways that would have been unthinkable in Europe at the time.

<sup>7</sup> These sorts of selective marriage practices and intragroup endogamy within elite sectors continue in the contemporary period and effectively act to reproduce nearly impermeable racialized social boundaries in modern Ecuador.

suggest the opposite, as the elite sector in colonial Spanish America remained dominated by persons classified as “white” (Hoberman 1986:316). Racial classification continued to function as the principal determinant of social position and “although prerequisites of wealth and education for entering the clergy or the bureaucracy might be waived, racial requirements were not ignored” (Hoberman 1986:317). Such a premium was placed on whiteness in colonial Spanish America that the Crown began to allow economically successful members of the mixed castas to purchase “legal whiteness” (*cédulas de gracias al sacar*), which authorized recipients to marry people classified as “white,” receive an education, hold public office and enter holy orders (Hoberman 1986:317, Lynch 1973:20-21, Mörner 1983:355). It was hoped that the *cédula* would serve as a counterbalance to increasing Criollo political economic aspirations for emancipation from the Spanish Crown (Mörner 1983:355). However, this “escape hatch” simply reinforced the importance of whiteness as a prerequisite for entering the elite sector and accessing colonial resources and privileges (Hoberman 1986:317, Mörner 1983:355). Furthermore, Mörner (1967:67) reports that the economic upward mobility enjoyed by some mestizos and other groups of castas led to increased racial prejudice on the part of the white (Criollo) elite.

During the 18th century, racial prejudice and marginalization continued to escalate, and elite privilege was subjected to increased internal debate as the Spanish Crown attempted to “modernize” the colonial state through the institution of elaborate bureaucracies designed to administer and control elite and non-elite populations more effectively. Determined to safeguard the political economic privilege they enjoyed as a result of their classification as “white,” the Criollo elite responded to the advance and expansion of intermediate groups with increased exclusivity and greater attention to social boundaries defined by racial classifications.

Furthermore, these types of perceived incursions into de facto Criollo privilege provided material motivation for somewhat ambivalent elite-driven independence movements in Spanish South America.

### **The Political Economy of Colonial Whiteness**

In the period following Spanish conquest in Incan South America, attention turned to settlement and the establishment of a colonial system of social organization and stratification that was starkly hierarchical from the beginning. Many of the conquistadors who participated in the conquest of Spanish South America were men seeking opportunities for upward mobility that were not available within the established feudal hierarchy in Spain. They focused their desire for upward mobility on the possibility of securing an *encomienda*, a royal grant issued by the Crown that gave the recipient the right to manage and receive tribute from the indigenous inhabitants on specified tracts of confiscated lands (Crain 1990:44; Field 1991:40; Hurtado 1980:3). In return, *encomenderos* were obligated to protect the people living in the area and to oversee their religious development and social well-being (Spalding 1984:124–125). The *encomienda* did not transfer land ownership from the Crown to individual Spaniards. Rather, *encomenderos* acted as stewards of both the tribute destined for the monarchy and the indigenous labor required to produce that tribute. Through this role, the *encomenderos* were entitled to a portion of the tribute provided by the indigenous people under their stewardship, which they then redistributed to the many settlers attached to *encomendero* households (Keith 1977:8). By purposely not granting title to the lands controlled by the *encomenderos* and attempting to ensure that indigenous communities were preserved intact with their own land, the Crown hoped to counteract the aspirations of the Spanish settlers by making them dependent on Spain to gain access to indigenous labor (Keith 1977:20; Lyons 2006:39; Spalding 1984:126). In effect, the

encomienda system did end up mirroring the system of feudal lordship in Europe and this proved problematic for the Spanish monarchy in terms of containing the growing aspirations and power of the encomenderos (and later, hacendados) from a distance. The encomienda system of indentured servitude, as well as the Spanish use of African slaves in the colonies, set into motion the particular New World elite notions about the essential inferiority of indigenes and blackness in relation to dominant elite whiteness.

Reflecting the European preoccupation with urbanity, Spanish colonists and administrators in South America, including the Audiencia of Quito, tended to concentrate in the city while the majority of the indigenous population was located outside of urban areas. To the colonial settlers, cities represented the epitome of culture and civilization (Hurtado 1980:2, Socolow 1986:12). At the same time, the settlers' experiences of the feudal system in Spain also encouraged the appropriation of vast tracts of land for symbolic and material purposes. Hurtado (1980:15-16) notes that the conquistadors, bureaucrats, and colonists who initially settled in the Audiencia of Quito and eventually became "principal citizens" (*vecinos principales*) brought with them from Spain a concept of social, political, and economic relations that was based on feudalistic values and practices. These included "the appropriation by the nobility of lands and their products; a hierarchical ordering of society; the vassalage of serfs subject to labor and tribute; the notion that possession of land constituted the principal source of wealth; [and] repression exercised over a subservient peasant class."

Colonialism offered Spanish settlers opportunities for social and economic advancement that were unheard of in feudal Spain, such that colonists who were not of the European nobility saw their status improved drastically simply by arriving in the Americas where they were transformed into *hidalgos*, or "gentlemen by designation" (Hurtado 1980:16-19, Mörner

1983:351). A racial component was almost immediately discernable in ideas about the absolute superiority of the Spanish value system and model of society in comparison to those of the indigenous peoples they encountered in the colonies. Following the predominant feudal ideals of the Occident in the 16<sup>th</sup> century regarding the proper behavior of “aristocrats,” Spanish settlers in the Audencia of Quito tried to avoid all forms of manual labor, believing such work was only for “low-born” people such as indios and negros (Hurtado 1980:16, Keith 1977:2). While this ideal could not be wholly enforced in a still-emerging colonial setting, the avoidance of manual labor did tend to distinguish elites from the growing mass of Spaniards in the colonies. Given the predominance of these social values, economic aspirations, and medieval conceptions of Spanish moral purity, it is not surprising that the large indigenous populations in the Andean highlands were incorporated into colonial society as objects of exploitation and marginalization rather than full members of society.

In the Spanish Audencia of Quito, colonial society was literally built by and on the backs of indigenous, mixed and Black Ecuadorians. Because the area did not contain an abundance of precious metals in comparison to many of Spain’s other colonial settlements in the New World, “indios” (and the labor they provided) represented one of the South American colonies’ most valuable natural resource (Lane 2003:90; Selverston 1999:27). In the Spanish colonial economic system, maintenance of the view of the “Indian” as socially inferior provided the justification for their enslavement. Thus, it was to the benefit of the colonial economic elite to encourage the preservation of indigenous cultures while simultaneously denigrating those cultures as inferior and questioning indigenous peoples’ capacity for reason (Hurtado 1980:27, Lane 2003, Selverston 1999:27).

The possession of land and control over indigenous labor were important to the Spanish settlers for political reasons, as well. Local governance in the colonies was the responsibility of the Spanish *cabildos*, which performed various legal, political, fiscal, and administrative duties. These councils were composed of local elites, and the positions conveyed additional prestige. The elite stratum of Spanish colonial society was made up primarily of Spanish and Criollo large landowners, important ministers and merchants, upper-level bureaucrats and clergy, and titled nobility. Because positions in the cabildos were often secured through purchase and/or inheritance until at least the last half of the 18th century, a strong correlation existed between political position and the monopolization of economic power (Hurtado 1980:12, Mörner 1983:354, Socolow 1986:6-9). Later arrivals from Spain maintained this relationship between political and economic power (Hurtado 1980:23), and these factors compelled the Spanish settlers to expand their rural and urban holdings, thereby circumventing Spanish colonial state control and setting the stage for the 19<sup>th</sup> century independence movements.

### **The Andean Hacienda & Hacendado Emerge**

The *encomienda*, with its reliance on indigenous tribute to provide income for both the colonial settlers and the Spanish monarchy, was not sustainable in the long-term. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *encomienda* had been replaced by the *hacienda* socioeconomic system characterized by large tracts of self-sufficient lands owned by prominent and often absent Criollo families. These lands were worked by a semi-free, mostly permanent residential indigenous labor force to provide goods to primarily local and regional markets (Keith 1977:7; Wolf and Mintz 1957). How then did the *encomienda* system, which did not include the assignment of land ownership, come to be replaced by the *hacienda* system of private Criollo large landowners throughout the Audiencia of Quito pushing for their independence from Spain? While many



factors contributed to this transition, changing demographic characteristics and economic conditions converged to usher in the era of the hacienda, which would dominate the social landscape well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the encomienda tribute redistribution system began to decline in effectiveness, Spanish settlers who had previously been supported in the households of encomenderos began to seek alternative methods of generating income. Growing regional demand stemming from a boom in silver mining facilitated the growth of a market system in which settlers were able to sell goods or services and generate their own personal wealth (Keith 1977:8). This widespread regional market system provided added incentive to acquire relatively cheap land for the production of agricultural products and/or textiles to be bought and sold in the regional market. In addition to serving as a marker of elite status, the income produced from surpluses collected from indigenous laborers on acquired tracts of hacienda lands was used to consume imported articles from Europe as demonstration of hacendado cultural ideals and values (Hurtado 1980:68). This further underscored their distinction in relation to plebian (white) Spanish settlers and the non-white masses. Significant declines in the indigenous population and the continuing loss of land to Spanish settlers made it increasingly difficult for indigenous communities to meet the Crown's demands for tribute and draft labor requirements (*mita*). As a result, many indigenous people sought refuge on the growing haciendas where landowners could offer some protections from the colonial state in exchange for providing permanent resident labor to the hacendado *patrón* (Lyons 2006:43, Keith 1977:22).

Once on the hacienda, indigenous laborers were coerced to remain there through various forms of debt peonage (Lyons 2006:43, Keith 1977:22, Wolf & Mintz 1957:39). In exchange for labor, the *huasipungeros* (tenant farmers) were given an advance in wages, grains or animals, a

small parcel of land (from lands originally confiscated from the indigenous population) to sustain their families and a few items of clothing (Hurtado 1980:48). In addition, the hacienda owners controlled vital natural resources, such as water and firewood, and required indigenous peasants to contribute labor in exchange for access to these resources (Crain 1990:45; de la Torre 1999:97; Hurtado 1980:48; Zamosc 1994:40). Racial dominance over the indigenous population was further consolidated through actions of the Catholic Church, which exerted considerable ideological control over the population as well as participating in the hacienda economy through its own vast tracts of confiscated lands (Crain 1990:45, de la Torre 1999:97, Hurtado 1980:54, Zamosc 1994:40).

From the inception of rural haciendas during the colonial period, hacendado elites in Ecuador tended to reside in the cities and administer their properties as absentee landlords, hiring administrators (*mayordomos*) to supervise and manage the hacienda and resident laborers (Keith 1977:15). Due to the limited nature of the local and regional markets to which Andean haciendas have historically supplied products for sale and hacendado desire for funds to support their growing social aspirations, many of these enterprises tended to shun extensive technological innovation or capital investment (Wolf and Mintz 1957:37). At the same time, the urban economy was, and for the most part has continued to be, highly dependent on the rural agricultural system in the highlands and on the coast. Therefore, the highland hacienda and the coastal plantation were the centers of political power and the hacendado the central focus of authority (Hurtado 1980:53).

Many scholars have described the model of authority employed in the hacienda system as protective, oppressive, autocratic and paternalistic (Hurtado 1980:53; Keith 1977:30–31; Lyons 2006; Stutzman 1981:68; de la Torre 2000:33). The hacendado patrón acted symbolically as

“father” to his indigenous and mestizo workers who were (and often still are) viewed as having capabilities and knowledge equivalent to dependent children. His role included specific symbolic and material obligations falling outside of typical capitalist wage-labor relations, which reinforced the hacendado’s dominance and superiority over his indigenous work force (Keith 1977: 30-31, Lyons 2006:12, Wolf & Mintz 1957:41-44). As the hacienda system developed further with semi-dependent labor producing agricultural goods destined for relatively stable internal urban and regional markets, Criollo settler-hacendados throughout Spanish American and particularly in the Audencia of Quito were able to establish themselves as a powerful elite sector residing near the pinnacle of a racialized colonial social hierarchy.

### **The Criollo Quest for Autonomous Domination**

By the end of the 17th century, Spanish America had virtually emancipated itself from its dependence on Spain and enjoyed a considerable degree of de facto independence as a result of the Spanish Crown’s policy of indirect rule in the Americas. This policy reflected Spain’s preoccupations with European power struggles and the desire to dedicate minimal resources for the administration of the Spanish American colonies (Lynch 1973:2–4). However, by the early 19th century this situation had changed significantly enough to propel the colonies in Spanish South America toward the movement for formal independence from Spain. One of the major catalysts of the Criollo-led independence movements was the renewal of imperial control over the colonies by way of the “modernizing” Bourbon reforms (Lynch 1973:4). The reforms were designed to increase Criollo economic dependency on the Spanish monarchy by eliminating the self-sufficiency they had attained during the long period of indirect rule and by reasserting control over production surpluses that had previously been retained within Criollo-directed inter-American trade networks (Lynch 1973:11). The relative effectiveness of the Bourbon Reforms

in the Audencia of Quito left a legacy of high taxes, intrusive government economic regulations and official corruption that endured into the republican era. It also contributed significantly to unrest leading to the outbreak of the autonomy movement in Quito by 1809 (Andrien 1995:191; Hurtado 1980:36–37).

Despite their subordination to peninsula-born Spaniards and attempts by the Crown to reestablish social control, by the end of the 18th century Criollos had solidly positioned themselves as land-owning, merchant, mining and bureaucratic elites. They controlled immense resources throughout Spanish South America, including vast amounts of land and the forced labor of African slaves and indentured indigenous peoples, as well as the power to extract taxes and tribute from all the groups below them in the ethnoracial social hierarchy (Pratt 1992:113). This was particularly the case in the Audencia of Quito where Criollos had successfully established and maintained a rigid and aristocratic hierarchy that coincided with the monopolization of wealth and state structures throughout the colonial period (Hurtado 1980:23; Larson 2004:103).

Ultimately, the greatest catalyst moving Criollo settlers toward independence from Spain was the perceived assaults on their ability to generate personal wealth and power through the direct domination and exploitation of the nonwhite and plebian masses. This was coupled with Iberian projections of the suspect marginal status of Criollos in relation to “true-born” Spaniards whose whiteness in the eyes of the Spanish monarchy was beyond question (Anderson 1991:57–58, Hoberman 1986:319, Lynch 1973:19). The Criollo-dominated independence movements in Spanish South America were, by and large, elitist and Europeanizing ones (Turner 2003:22). In fact, Criollo objections to the colonial regime tended to be pragmatic rather than ideological. Consequently, while the outcome of these movements varied throughout the vast region of

Spanish South America, for the most part independence from Spain did not radically alter the ethnoracial system of social hierarchy that existed within the former colonies or result in any significant redistribution of resources or wealth. Power and resources were simply transferred from the Spanish to a local elite Criollo class which continued to control the means of production. The elite Criollo “liberators” had no intention of decolonizing many, if not most, of the colonial relations of labor, property and hierarchy already in place that supported their positions of social privilege (Ayala Mora 2008:108; Pratt 1992:188). In Ecuador, the formal transfer of power from the colonial state to a newly formed independent Criollo state was accompanied by a self-conscious shift in terms of their engagement with European modernity and associated symbolic and material strategies of racialized domination.

### **Hierarchy and Domination in the New Republic**

The territory that has come to be known as Ecuador won its independence from Spanish rule in 1822 when Simón Bolívar defeated a Spanish army at the Battle of Pichincha. Bolívar then united Ecuador with Colombia and Venezuela to form the state of Gran Colombia. In 1830, the Republic of Ecuador became an independent entity, seceding from Gran Colombia for many of the same issues that had initially spawned the colonial battles for independence (Hurtado 1980:40). Not surprisingly, Ecuador (the former Audencia of Quito) emerged from the independence movements with a fairly cohesive and conservative aristocratic ruling class with little incentive to radically alter the social hierarchy in the country or initiate any significant redistribution of wealth (Crain 1990:45, Field 1991:41, Hurtado 1980:40, Larson 2004:103). Facing the dilemma of how to go about developing an apparatus of state government and designing a new cultural plan for a unified “imagined community” without any historical precedent (Larson 2004:38), the traditional elite “Creole pioneers” (Anderson 1991) in Ecuador

chose to forge a modern nation-state by selectively using liberal discourse in concert with the continuation of racialized systems of stratification and exploitation (Silverblatt 2004:17, Weismantel & Eisenman 1998:126).

During this period, the Ecuadorian national identity was defined as either white or white-mestizo and modeled after Iberian cultural patterns and values. Not surprisingly, a preference was expressed for the ability to trace one's lineage to European ancestry, rather than encouraging the cultivation of a distinct national culture or identity based on contributions from the indigenous majority (Crain 1990:46, Hurtado 1980:86, Selverston 1999:91). Even though a majority of the population was biologically *indomestizo*, Criollos were considered "white" and "cultured," while "Indians" were stigmatized as the primitive contrast to the ideal Europeanized national subject (Crain 1990:46, Zamosc 1994:46). Crain (1990:46) explains further that "while Ecuadorians of Hispanic or mixed descent frequently received appellations such as *gente de cultura* [people with culture], Indians as well as Blacks were the savage "Other," the people whose culture was found lacking." Native languages, such as Quichua, were not recognized and their use denigrated. In this way, ethnic discrimination and exclusion that began during Spanish rule became more solidly entrenched in the evolving nation of Ecuador

Criollo elites in Ecuador drew on Enlightenment ideals and the scientific discourse of modern racism that was derived from pre-Enlightenment ideas about natural difference in their efforts to establish an independent society and culture that retained European values and white supremacy (Pratt 1992:175, Weismantel & Eisenman 1998:126). Throughout this dynamic process, Criollo elites likely found themselves placed uneasily between two Europes and two modernities, connecting with a Spanish heritage that linked them to "civilization" and "reason" by virtue of their "whiteness" while also presenting themselves in opposition to both Spanish

colonial despotism and northwestern European representations of Spanish Americans as backward and in need of civilizing (Coronil 1996; Larson 2004:66; Pratt 1992:152–153). In point of fact, the language of the civilizing mission, derived from pre-Enlightenment ethnocentrism and produced by “enlightened” Europeans, would become a centerpiece of Ecuador’s national modernizing project during the early republican period.

Mark Thurner (2003:29) characterizes the 19th century projects of postcolonial nation-state formation as Creole nationalist “internal settler colonialism.” However, he cautions against the tendency to see these projects simply as the continuation of earlier imperial designs and notes that in many cases the consequences of these projects of internal settler colonialism for indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations were more pronounced than during the formal colonial period of Spanish imperial rule from abroad (Thurner 2003:28–29). Instead, these projects reflect an important shift in terms of modern schemes of domination and control. Racialized exploitation actually intensified in post-independence period in Ecuador and throughout Andean South America. It was justified through liberal discourses calling for private property conversion and hacienda growth, the internal colonization of areas previously left alone and the privatization of social discipline targeting indigenous peoples via the hacienda complex (Guerrero 2003:296–297; Larson 2004:112; Pratt 1992:188; Thurner 2003:28–29). The newly independent national state in Ecuador increasingly drew on modern discourses of “race” becoming prominent throughout Enlightenment Europe to justify and rationalize the reinvigoration of structures of domination and exploitation first introduced by the early modern Spanish colonial state.

Post-independence efforts to build the Ecuadorian state infrastructure along the lines of “modernizing” discourses were shaped by intact ideological underpinnings of Criollo elite

privilege during the colonial period. Thus, the early national state carried on the colonial tradition of exploiting, rather than developing, the economic potential of the newly independent nation (Andrien 1995:191). The most explicit forms of state-sponsored exploitation included the maintenance of regressive taxes and the reinstitution of Indian tribute during the late 1820s to bankrupt the resource-starved state system, both of which remained the main sources of public revenues (Andrien 1995:215, Guerrero 2003:278, Larson 2004:105).

When Simón Bolívar resurrected Indian tribute in 1828, principles of universalism were offered as the justification for its restoration without the special corporate juridical rights and jurisdictions for indigenous peoples that had accompanied tribute obligations under the colonial system (Larson 2004:105-106). Attempts to extend the tribute obligation to additional populations demonstrate the limits of liberal principles of universalism within a context where the exploitation of an indigenous majority had long been justified through projections of essential difference. In 1847, some members of the fledgling state again drew on ideas of universalism and attempted to extend tribute requirements to the adult male “white” population in efforts to increase revenue and establish “a republic of free and equal individuals based on universal principles of citizenship” (Guerrero 2003:278). In this effort, the “state” was soundly defeated by the violent rebellion of “poor whites” who rejected the proposition on the grounds that by paying the same type of tribute as was required of indigenous persons, they would experience downward mobility and become “Indianized” members of the republic versus “citizens,” a position that had long been associated with proper “whiteness” (Guerrero 2003:281-283). This suggests that within little more than a decade following independence, the racialized



category of *español* had completed its transition to *blanco* (white),<sup>8</sup> thus signaling the turn toward scientifically conceived ideas about naturalized difference that became solidified through northwestern Enlightenment thought.

While the conservative Criollo hacendado elites who dominated the state system throughout the 19th century were skeptical of many ideas associated with economic liberalism, they were quite willing to adopt the discourse of the “civilizing mission” to justify maintaining a racialized system of domination and servitude in the nascent nation (Larson 2004:103). At this time, heated parliamentary debates took place in Ecuador centering on the absolutism of landlord power and the related practices of labor recruitment and retention on highland haciendas (Guerrero 1997:563–567; Larson 2004:111). Although indigenous tribute requirements were eventually abolished in 1857, the national government failed to curb or end the practice of indentured servitude that bound indigenous peoples to haciendas. These debates also granted moral agency to the exploitation practiced by landed traditional hacendado elites through representations of indigenous peoples as poor, ignorant, lacking in reason and utterly helpless, conditions which translated into the need for paternalistic management strategies and “protections” provided through indentured service to haciendas (Guerrero 1997:564-568, Guerrero 2003:296-297, Larson 2004:112). Ultimately, these mid-19th century parliamentary debates also led to the nationalization of the “Indian problem,” which held that the backwardness and ignorance of the “Indian race” was responsible for blocking order, progress, civilization, and modernity in the independent nation. In response to this dilemma, the Catholic Church was

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, my hacendado elite contacts consistently refer to themselves and their social peers as “*español*” in discussions about contemporary racial categories in Ecuador. I have very rarely heard the term “*blanco*” used by members of this social group, although members of other social sectors have often used the term with me to refer to my contacts. My contacts’ use of “*español*” as a racial category may suggest a shift once again toward the salience of ancestral links to Spanish Europeanness, especially in light of Spain’s admission into the European Union.

enlisted in the civilizing mission to prepare “Indians” for gradual entry into the lower ranks of civilized society (apparently this being the best they could hope for given their natural degraded state and lack of reason) (Larson 2004:114-115).

The “Indian problem” and the civilizing project that acts as its solution depicted indigenous peoples as a fallen race of suffering laborers whose biology fated them to serve the nation as “beasts of burden” (Guerrero 1997:578, Larson 2004:119, 140). Concepts regarding the immutability of race provided the moral justification for state-sponsored conscripted labor practices beginning in the 1860s wherein indigenous work gangs literally subsidized Ecuador’s economic modernization by building the nation’s infrastructure (Larson 2004:117-120). The colonial *mita* functioned in similar ways to underwrite colonial economic development endeavors, but whereas labor requirements under Spanish colonialism were based on the position of indigenous peoples as subjects of the Crown, forced labor extractions in the post-independence republic were justified through the scientific idioms of modern race (Larson 2004:119).

These debates reveal how Criollo elites were able to refashion elements of the colonial society of castas within the modern idiom of race, thereby obscuring the social, political and economic processes involved in the historical construction of this racial category and the relations of domination underpinning the “Indian” classification. Thus, “Indians” were a “problem” that had to be managed by the hacendado elite, but also a vital “natural resource” that was the centerpiece of the Ecuadorian nation’s 19th century modernizing projects. The natural “degradedness” of the “Indian race” was an obstacle to modern progress and civilization but also the biological justification for the exploitation of indigenous peoples as “beasts of burden” fueling the engine of modernity. As we will see in the following sections, such discourses

intensified throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Ecuador as traditional hacendado elites and liberal coastal elites continued to seek mechanisms by which they could maximize their own status and personal gain through exploitation of the “nonwhite” majority population, which until recent decades was consistently excluded from the nation’s imagined community and blamed for the nation’s lack of economic development.

### **National Identity Formation**

As the twentieth century unfolded, elite attention turned toward developing the national economy and furthering modernization. The hacienda cultural complex and economy continued to exploit indigenous and peasant labor through indentured servitude in the highlands and low-wage labor fueling the agro-export economy of the coastal region (Larrea and North 1997:915–917; Suárez-Torres and López-Paredes 1997:88). As in previous historical periods, Ecuadorian landowners cited the intrinsic inferiority of indigenous and African peoples as justification for the system of unequal social and economic relations upon which the hacienda complex depended. Additionally, since large landholders in both the highlands and the coast controlled the fledgling state, these exploited populations had little recourse to national protections typically guaranteed through citizenship (Crain 1990:45).

During the 1930s, elites in Ecuador began to expound a view of national economic development in the country that was explicitly tied to more inclusive conceptions of national identity emphasizing increased consumption. This approach to national development focused on increasing industrialization through the establishment of capital-intensive industries supplying goods for foreign economies and the import of goods and products from the industrialized world for internal consumption (Larrea 1998:180; Larrea and North 1997:914; Whitten 1981b:6). This development approach impacted the manner in which the rural, primarily nonwhite populace was

viewed in terms of the national community. Whereas during previous periods the consumption of import goods was a privilege reserved exclusively for highland and coastal elites, the success of this model of national development required the participation of the majority population in the realm of consumption. Once again indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians were blamed for the country's lack of development. Despite four centuries of elite-driven social policies that explicitly sought to marginalize nonwhite populations in order to control and direct their labor toward the generation of wealth exclusively for highland and coastal elites (and other "whites") to enable them to consume, the primary cause of Ecuador's weak economy in the first half of the twentieth century was primarily blamed on "Indians." Their failure to consume was holding back progress in the nation, as it was estimated that at least half of the country's population was not integrated into the internal market (Clark 1998:204–205).

National development planners and policy makers called for the education of rural populations not only to increase literacy, but also to "awaken necessities" in the minds of the population, encouraging greater consumption (Clark 1998:204–205, Stutzman 1981:69). According to this discourse, indigenous populations were linked to rural areas and were typically dirty, ignorant, lacking in culture, generally primitive and having failed to "progress" much socially or economically since independence was won from Spain (Clark 1998:204; Stutzman 1981:65; de la Torre 2000:38–39; de la Torre 1999:100).

Modern economic growth policies in Ecuador continue to call for a "re-education of the population in such a way as to permit and facilitate national development along the lines of the modern, consumption-oriented world" (Stutzman 1981:56). Capitalist economic development strategies that are based on maximizing the consumption of and dependence on goods that are industrially produced either nationally or abroad dominate national development policies (Crain

1990:56, Stutzman 1981:67, Whitten 1981:14). The success of these policies depends on the minimization of self-sufficiency and increased participation in the cash economy by the rural, nonwhite populations (Crain 1990:56, Stutzman 1981:74). In this way, the association of backwardness and ignorance with indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples who are the primary inhabitants of Ecuador's rural areas has been reified through national economic development policies. The emphasis on consumption for national economic development in Ecuador also calls attention to the manner in which elite lifestyles and ideals have continued to set standards for national culture and identity that are based on the presumed superiority of social and cultural "whiteness" in the country. These discriminatory views based on ascribed racialized identity became part of the official state rhetoric in recent decades under the rubric of national identity construction.

### **Ecuador's Janus-Faced National Identity**

From the 1950s onward in Ecuador, the "Indian" was identified with the backwardness of the country, and the indigenous population was characterized as an impediment to progress and national development. The solution offered to address the "Indian problem" (which presumably also includes the dilemma posed by the presence of Afro-Ecuadorians) was the gradual elimination of indigenous and non-white populations through *mestizaje*, a process of assimilation wherein these populations would become mestizos. Mestizaje became the official policy of national identity construction during the 1960s (Beck and Mijeski 2000:121; Crain 1990:47; de la Torre 1999:97; Meisch 1992:69; Selverston 1999:92). Mestizaje has been described as the "very beginning of Ecuadorian history" and the "essence of *Ecuadorianidad*" (Rahier 1998:422). In the case of Ecuador, the ideology of mestizaje asserts that all true Ecuadorians are of mixed European and indigenous descent and that the resulting mestizo represents the prototype of

modern Ecuadorian citizenship<sup>9</sup> (Rahier 1998:421; Stutzman 1981:59; Yelvington 1997:222).

This approach to national identity construction contends that the mixture of races has been common in Ecuador at least since the period of Incan invasions that preceded Spanish colonialism. Mestizaje holds that this type of hybridity accelerated during the period of Spanish colonialism resulting in a unique type of human – the mestizo – who is a child of both the Old World (Spain) and the New World (America).

However, while traits and characteristics associated with European heritage are valued for their contributions to the future of the nation, only symbols from the long-extinguished Incan indigenous past tend to be valorized in the ideology of mestizaje (Crain 1990:50, Stutzman 1981:59, de la Torre 1999:97, Yelvington 1997:222). Contemporary indigenous cultural symbols and lifestyles are considered signs of inferiority. In fact, this sort of nationalist dialogue in Ecuador attributed the high levels of poverty experienced by indigenous populations to their race. As Norman Whitten explains, “From the nationalist perspective, poor Indians are poor because they are Indians, but wealthier Indians are such in spite of their “race.” Poor whites or poor mestizos, however, are poor because of the state of the nation, because of its failure to homogenize – the poor non-Indian can blame his poverty on the very fact of continued indigenous existence” (1981:17).

The official doctrine of mestizaje articulated by national state elites who are overwhelmingly classified as “white” is, of course, misleading. Ever since the Spanish colonial period implemented a system of castas based on race thinking in the Audiencia of Quito, elites in

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<sup>9</sup> Until recently the place of Afro-Ecuadorians in the process of national identity construction was rarely defined. While national mestizaje discourse often assigned positive contributions from past indigenous cultures, no positive attributes are credited to the admixture of African descendents in the national “pool” (Rahier 1998:422, Stutzman 1981: 63, de la Torre 2000:42). Rather, Afro-Ecuadorians are often stereotyped as lazy, untrustworthy, strong but lacking in intelligence, and aggressive or violent (Rahier 1998:423). In many ways, black Ecuadorians appear to have even fewer opportunities than indigenous persons to access the benefits of Ecuadorian citizenship.

Ecuador have disdained the concept of social and biological admixture. In reality, mestizaje calls for the cultural whitening of Ecuadorian society, rather than the true “mixing” of blood and culture.<sup>10</sup> The push for cultural whitening, or *blanqueamiento*, expounded in schools, popular media, and public speeches, is exemplified by the following comment made by Ecuadorian President Guillermo Rodríguez Lara in the 1970s, “There is no more Indian problem. We all become white when we accept the goals of national culture” (quoted in Meisch 1992:69). This statement clearly articulates the prevailing ideology in Ecuador that views national culture as “white.”

One way to understand this contradiction between national projections of identity and the localized expression of ideals is provided by Michael Herzfeld’s concept of disemia, which he defines as “the formal or coded tension between official self-presentation and what goes on in the privacy of collective introspection” (1997:14). In Ecuador, this sort of disemia is expressed in the space between official representations of national identity and the on-the-ground articulation of national cultural ideals and values. While, in theory, mestizaje is understood to be based on the concept of “racial mixing,” phenotypical and cultural characteristics associated with whiteness are highly valued, whereas characteristics associated with Indianness or Blackness are denigrated and stigmatized (de la Torre 1999:97, Whitten 1981:16). Despite the official rhetoric of mestizaje, whiteness in Ecuador continues to be linked to high status, power, wealth, civilized culture, urbanity and progress. While individual identification as mestizo may place one higher on the social hierarchy, whiteness continues to be a social space reserved exclusively for elites (Halpern and Winddance Twine 2000:21; de la Torre 1999:97; Rahier 1998:422; Stutzman 1981:77; Whitten 1981b:16). The Janus-faced nature of Ecuadorian mestizaje/*blanqueamiento*

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<sup>10</sup> Conversations with my elite consultants throughout the period of my field research consistently pointed to an ongoing prohibition against marrying persons from other “races” or with suspect pedigrees.

makes transparent the crucial role that racialized identity still plays in the production and maintenance of Ecuadorian social boundaries and the justification of a political economic system based on structured inequality.

## **Conclusion**

The indigenous population in Ecuador has been subjected to various forms of racism and discrimination since the first days of the Spanish Conquest. Whether it has been the characterization of “indios” from the Amazonian region as “head-shrinking savages” or the highlands indigenous populations as “submissive,” “passive” and “lazy,” racialized discrimination against the indigenous “Other” has been the prevailing social policy. This discrimination became entrenched and institutionalized in the independent Republic through the dominance of a hacienda economy based on indentured servitude and the maintenance of a literacy requirement attached to voting rights until 1979, which given the lack of educational opportunities virtually guaranteed that indigenous peoples would be excluded from the political community. Although the philosophy of nation-building embraced by the state of Ecuador called for the assimilation of indigenous peoples through mestizaje, they continued to be denied the rights of citizenship and equal treatment due to policies of forced labor and exclusion from the political system. As a result, the policy of assimilation pushed by the state failed to provide the indigenous population with much evidence that there were benefits to abandoning their traditional culture and lifestyles. As we will see in the following chapter, in many cases it was precisely the traditional emphasis on collectivity and kinship ties that sustained indigenous communities and provided the organizational structure necessary to demand access to resources as citizens of the state of Ecuador (Van Cott 1994:6).



This chapter considered the historical, material and ideological development of the traditional hacendado elite in Andean Ecuador. It suggests that the historical trajectory of Ecuador's internal social hierarchy has been overwhelmingly distinguished by continuity in terms of form (i.e., a rigid, vertically-organized caste-like system) and content (i.e., socioeconomic position determined on the basis of highly essentialized and racialized classifications privileging cultural and phenotypical whiteness). It is clear that the continuity of this hierarchical system has enabled a minority sector of interconnected and closely aligned traditional hacendado elites to enjoy privileged access to social esteem and wealth in the form of land, labor and goods in the country for more than 300 years. The continuity of this configuration of social hierarchy, however, has not been achieved without struggle. Rather, the traditional landowning elite in Ecuador have regularly employed multiple forms of coercion to maintain their individual and group privilege and dominance. These include: the control and monopolization of available land, thereby limiting the availability of alternatives open to rural indigenous and mestizo laborers; the creation and utilization of a state-sanctioned system of debt peonage that kept laborers tied to haciendas; and the institution of a racialized symbolic system justifying and rationalizing as "natural" the denigration, marginalization, and exploitation of nonwhite identities.

Until recently, individuals who sought to maintain their indigenous or African ethnic identity were considered not only inferior to mestizos and whites, but were also excluded from the rights and benefits of Ecuadorian citizenship (de la Torre 2000:34, de la Torre 1999:34, Yelvington 1997:226, Whitten 1981:26). From its inception, the Ecuadorian nation explicitly based its development projects and programs on white elite ideals and a system of ideation that denigrated and stigmatized all non-white ethnicities. The next chapter considers multiple forces

of change that traditional hacendados have faced in recent decades. These transformations have repeatedly posed challenges to the dominance of all factions of the traditional landowning elite social class, and especially the highland hacendado elite. At the same time, the chapter demonstrates the multiple ways in which traditional hacendado elites have historically overcome these challenges to status-quo conceptions of status and privilege.

## **CHAPTER TWO: UNSETTLING TRADITIONAL HACENDADO ELITE PRIVILEGE**

### **Modern Challenges to Traditional Dominance**

The previous chapter's focus on the continuity of Ecuadorian social hierarchy is not intended to give the impression that the country's social, economic, and political history has been characterized by stagnation or even relative calm. On the contrary, Ecuador's history since achieving independence from Spanish colonial rule has been marked with political and social instability and widespread government corruption, as evidenced by frequent turnovers in presidents (18 presidents between 1897 and 1934 and 33 presidents between 1934 and 2003) and several periods of military rule (1937-1938, 1963-1966, 1972-1979). To date, political and economic power in the Republic of Ecuador has been concentrated in the liberal coastal city of Guayaquil and the conservative highland capital city of Quito. As we will see in the sections that follow, power struggles between elites in Quito and Guayaquil have been long-standing and sometimes marked with violence (Becker 1992:8; Whitten 1981b:4). Despite these power struggles, elites in the highlands and on the coast have demonstrated remarkable consistency in their willingness to ally with one another when faced with challenges to status quo understandings of Ecuadorian social order and their privileged positions within it.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on forces in the country that encouraged the continuity of particular social formations and ideas about difference, the present chapter is about disruption, change, and challenge. I examine the forces of change that represent challenges to traditional hacendado elite status and distinction. This chapter explores the waxing and waning of traditional hacendado elite distinction over time and in relation to broader social, economic and political transformations in the country. It considers the cultural work that is involved in the

shaping of elite identity as well as elite responses to change. In this endeavor, I return to the period following independence from both Spain and Gran Colombia in order to consider the multiple forces of change that have coalesced in more recent decades to challenge the dominance of all factions of the traditional landowning elite social class, and especially the highland hacendado elite with whom I have spent so much of my time in Ecuador. While Ecuador has witnessed change and instability since the period of Spanish colonialism, the pace and reach of social transformations impacting traditional hacendado elites accelerated and deepened with the introduction of agrarian reforms and petroleum exportation during the 1960s and 1970s. Similar to events unfolding in other parts of the world, this period ushered in dramatic changes in the organization and focus of the Ecuadorian economy and society.

Many of the changes aimed at achieving social reforms and the redistribution of vital resources in the country have, until recently, met with only limited success. For example, while the economic transformations resulting from the Ecuadorian banana boom shifted the balance of elite power from Quito to Guayaquil and eroded the traditional power of hacendados in the highlands, the discovery of oil in the Oriente increased the national state's wealth and Quito's prestige as the seat of the national government, within which members of the traditional hacendado elite have held key professional positions due to their privileged access to education and specialized training (Hurtado 1980:61, de la Torre 1999:97, Whitten 1981:12). As a result, these changes did little to alter the discriminatory pattern of inter-ethnic social relations in the country or the relative position of traditional landholding elites vis-à-vis the nonwhite majority population. However, transformations stemming from modernization efforts and the connection of these same economic forces to international lending and adjustment programs have managed

to rattle traditional hacendado elites, while also ushering in potentially more ominous threats to social stability in the country.

The implementation of neoliberal reforms, in particular, has posed a number of challenges for the traditional hacendado elite in Ecuador. These reforms strengthened a rising neoliberal elite tied to booming coastal financial and agro-export sectors. They also helped create the conditions for dramatic growth in the informal economy, which has provided opportunities for some non-traditional, nonwhite populations (from the perspective of my traditional hacendado elite consultants) to accumulate substantial wealth. Both of these sectors are threatening the traditional hacendado elites' positions of social privilege in the contemporary period. At the same time, the consolidation of highly organized national and regional indigenous movements have gained widespread popular support and are explicitly contesting previously taken-for-granted and rigidly maintained social boundaries and ideas about difference that have helped assure for decades the traditional elite sector's cultural hegemony in Ecuador (Andolina 1999; Collins 2006; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Weismantel 2001; Whitten 2003c; Whitten 2003b; Whitten 2004). This chapter outlines the contours of these transformations and the ways in which they intersect with the experiences of traditional hacendado elites in the highlands. Both this chapter and the preceding chapter provide conceptual guideposts intended to orient the reader and facilitate interpretations of the fine-grained ethnographic material presented in the chapters that follow.

### **The Rise of Coastal Agro-Export Elites**

As long as Ecuador's national economy was primarily derived from highland agricultural activities carried out to meet the demands of limited internal and regional markets, traditional landowning elites in the highlands and on the coast had little difficulty maintaining their

positions of social privilege, economic dominance and political power. In fact, their main competitor for economic power immediately before and following independence was the Catholic Church (Hurtado 1980:153). This relative stability within the elite social sector was not to last, however. The character of the nation's economy began to change markedly with the presidency of Gabriel García Moreno in 1860. As discussed in the previous chapter, Moreno was interested in creating a "modern" nation-state, and he used vast amounts of conscripted indigenous labor in state efforts geared toward infrastructure development (Hurtado 1980:70; Larson 2004:118). Moreno also passed a number of laws and decrees that were intended to facilitate the creation of a capital market, the formation of a banking system and the opening of the country to foreign trade and capital (Hurtado 1980:70). Moreno's actions and policies helped usher in the country's first export-based agricultural boom on the coast. With it emerged a new economic and political elite sector that provided serious challenge to the authority and dominance of traditional hacendado elites (Striffler 2002:22).

#### Cacao Cultivation & the Coastal Agro-Export Plutocracy

Ecuador was a major producer of cacao destined for the world market between 1860 and 1920 (North 2004:187–188; Striffler 2002:22).<sup>11</sup> Cacao production in Ecuador was concentrated on large plantation estates along the coastal river system. Estate owners were able to keep production costs very low thanks to a combination of abundant semi-servile and semi-waged labor and the coastal area's natural fertility. In addition to the availability of cheap labor, the extensive coastal river system, which provided direct access to the port of Guayaquil, helped to

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<sup>11</sup> Ecuadorian cacao is once again becoming an important export. Today, small and large producers of cacao are increasingly able to tap into the global niche market for fine chocolates by providing high quality, high cost cacao.

keep transportation costs very low (Larrea and North 1997:915). The clearing and preparation of estate lands, cultivation and other labor activities on cacao estates were accomplished by *sembradores*, laborers who relied on subsistence agriculture and were tied to the estates by debt. In addition, migrants from the southern highlands formed a seasonal wage labor force that assisted with the cacao harvest (Larrea & North 1997:916). During this period in the Andean highlands, a majority of the population continued to be somewhat isolated in rural indigenous communities and were locked into servile relations of production dominated by large private and Church-owned haciendas in that region (Larrea and North 1997:916; Suarez-Torres and López-Paredes 1997:88).

It was during the cacao phase of export production in Ecuador that a powerful outward-oriented oligarchy was first formed in the city of Guayaquil. This oligarchy contained within it major players who represented and largely directed all of the components necessary for cacao export, including cacao production, banking, finance, export and import enterprises. The small but extremely powerful group was comprised of only a handful of families but controlled a majority of the capital created from cacao production and export (Larrea & North 1997:915, Suárez-Torres & López-Paredes 1997:88, Striffler 2002:22). Although a parallel core of landowning elites associated with the hacienda agricultural complex was also in place in the highlands city of Quito at this time, their economic and political power was dwarfed by that of the Guayaquil cacao oligarchy. The revenue generated by cacao production and export quickly became critically important to the developing state, and the coastal oligarchy was able to seize control of the national government. Larrea and North (1997:915) report that the Guayaquil-based “agro-financial and export oligarchy” went to great efforts to maintain and increase their familial holdings, including the proscription of marriages to individuals outside of this small

circle of families. Their uncontested reign at the national level was short-lived, however, as the collapse of the cacao boom in the 1920s brought an end to the tradition of a single dominant group controlling the central government. From that point forward, crisis and instability in government became the norm, with coastal and highland elites in constant competition to mobilize popular support in their efforts to gain control of the state apparatus (North 2004:188; Striffler 2002:23; Whitten 1981b:4–5). However, the strength of the outward-oriented coastal elite sector was such that it was able to survive the bankruptcies and estate losses that followed the collapse of Ecuador's cacao economy and ultimately recoup its economic power alongside the recovery of the country's export-based economy following World War II (Larrea and North 1997:916). This outward orientation of coastal elites very much aligned with traditional hacendado elite valorization of Europe and the United States and both factions of elites longed for economic development that mirrored the systems found in those areas of the world.

### Boom and Bust: Bananas and the Coastal Elite

Ecuador's banana boom facilitated the re-ascendancy of a sector of coastal agro-export elites whose economic and political power challenged the social dominance of traditional hacendado elites in the highlands. Furthermore, the growth of this elite faction was once again facilitated by a developmentalist state, this time under the direction of President Galo Plaza Lasso<sup>12</sup> (Corkill and Cubitt 1988:19; North 2004:193). Ecuador's banana boom period (approximately 1948 to 1972) also gave rise to the creation of a large wage-labor force on the coast and the beginnings of a state-directed infrastructure necessary to maximize banana export

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to his strong push for democracy and capitalist development in Ecuador, Galo Plaza Lasso was also a powerful and paternalistic hacendado with familial and business ties to both the coast and the highlands. Several of his descendants participated in the research detailed in Chapters Three, Four and Five.



activities. The extensive labor requirements of banana export activities led to massive waves of migration from the highlands to coastal areas, both for work on banana plantations and to assist with the construction and maintenance of new roads, port facilities, and transportation, communication and commercialization systems. In addition to public investment in infrastructure, investments in social development were also made in the form of credit and technical assistance programs to encourage expansion of the agricultural frontier. This resulted in the emergence of a fledgling yet sizable rural middle class comprised of small-to-medium sized banana farms (Corkill & Cubitt 1988:19, Larrea & North 1997:916-917, Striffler 2002:40).

By the early 1970s, negative trends in the realm of banana exports had begun to emerge in Ecuador. Technological transformations led to a drastic reduction in the size of the labor force required for the production and export of bananas, as well as large reductions in the amount of wages paid to those laborers who remained. These same technological transformations also led to a reduction in the number of producers involved in the sector, and profits began to be concentrated among a few large conglomerates that were able to provide their producers with financial assistance to incorporate the new technologies (Larrea & North 1997:917-918). After a brief parenthesis of broad-based prosperity, inequality began to rise again as displaced wage laborers with few alternative options for employment were forced to join the informal sector of the economy in order to survive (Corkill & Cubitt 1988:32).

While the banana phase of Ecuadorian economic development did help create a rural middle class of small-to-medium sized banana producers, technological changes in the sector coupled with coastal elites' political and capital dominance significantly reduced the size and power of this emerging class. While the state had played a large role in the expansion of the banana sector by providing infrastructure, credit and some technical assistance to encourage

small- and medium-sized producers, it did not make any efforts to prevent the concentration of assets and profits within just four large export firms, three of which were foreign-owned (Larrea & North 1997:917-918, Striffler 2002:117-125). The inaction on the part of the Ecuadorian state is further evidence of the deep penetration of coastal agro-export elites into national policy making. In addition to controlling a majority of the available capital and infrastructure, agro-export elites had obtained enough political power to block any government initiatives or policies considered detrimental to their own personal interests. A parallel sector of Quito-based elite economic groups that emerged from the traditional hacendado landowner class in the highlands was also able to diversify their economic bases and consolidate capital and political resources derived from domestic market production during this time (Larrea & North 1997:918).

As in earlier periods, neither group of elites was interested in advancing socioeconomic reforms that might result in a more equitable distribution of the country's wealth and resources. In fact, the regionally-oriented coastal agro-export elites and traditional hacendado elites in the highlands have instead been remarkably successful at mobilizing the popular masses to political action in defense of their own narrow economic interests by specifically appealing to sentiments of regional loyalty<sup>13</sup> (North 2004:188). Similarly, the promotion and implementation of economic and social policies by elected government officials were often based directly on the influence of powerful factions in either Quito or Guayaquil, as alignment with power elites from one of the two regions was necessary to secure votes in open elections (Becker 1992:8; Larrea and North 1997:914; North 1999:6).

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<sup>13</sup> One need only open a Quito- or Guayaquil-based newspaper to find examples of these sorts of appeals in the contemporary period. Regional rivalries and schisms are regularly depicted in domestically produced telenovelas and while living in Quito I rarely completed a day without someone making reference to the deep differences (*diferencias profundas*) between not only Quito and Guayaquil, but more importantly, between Quiteños and Guayaquileños.

As the banana export economy slid into decline, the fledgling rural middle class was impotent when confronted with the economic and political resources available to these factions of elites, which have consistently unified when necessary to form a powerful and cohesive block to policies and programs that threaten their own narrow private interests (Corkill & Cubitt 1988:35, North 2004:188). Even though a majority of the political activity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has revolved around the competition between these two dominant factions of Ecuadorian elites, they have almost always recognized in each other a natural alliance and have responded as a united block to quash popular mobilization or reformist impulses in the country.

### **Oil, the Military, and Modernization**

Ecuador again experienced rapid economic growth during the 1970s when the country became an oil exporter (Berry 1998:26; Corkill and Cubitt 1988:21; Larrea 1998:180; Larrea and North 1997:919). This growth phase lasted until the latter part of the decade when oil exports stagnated. The central government's income increased substantially during this phase of economic development as a result of direct state control of the petroleum industry. The influx of oil income made it possible for the state to direct considerable attention toward capitalist development aimed at modernizing the country (Zamosc 1994:42). However, not even the establishment of two military dictatorships (1963–1966 and 1972–1979) explicitly dedicated to national development through modernization of the economy and the initiation of social programs aimed at resource redistribution could effectively curb the power of traditional landholding elites in Quito and Guayaquil. Those two factions of elites continued to use their social and economic dominance to stymie the implementation of social or economic projects that they perceived as detrimental to traditional elite personal interests (Corkill & Cubitt 1988:19, Hurtado 1980:182-183, Larrea & North 1997:918). Although an important goal of both military

regimes was to strengthen state institutions enough to address the vast social disparities that left a majority of the national population marginalized, the central government drastically underestimated the power and foresight of highland and coastal elites.

As the banana boom started winding down and state revenues derived from petroleum began to climb, many highland hacendado elites and coastal agro-export elites saw an opportunity to capitalize on the changing circumstances. They sought financial and policy assistance from the newly income-rich state in order to diversify their portfolios by entering more fully into industrial activities in collaboration with foreign investors. The Ecuadorian state responded positively to their efforts by reinvesting export earnings domestically, thereby leading to a rapid process of import-substitution industrialization (ISI) and the modernization of some sectors of agriculture (Larrea 1998:180, Larrea & North 1997:914). Although the ISI model of growth was first introduced during the banana boom, it did not become dominant until the petroleum boom was in full swing. In theory, the ISI model was designed to be intentionally protectionist, emphasizing the development of domestic industries rather than relying on import goods to meet domestic needs and being dependent on exports as the major contributor to the national economy (Berry 1998:14). In reality, the ISI system in Ecuador was severely constrained in its capacity to redistribute gains from economic growth because the manufacturing industry, which capitalized on state protectionist measures, was both capital-intensive and import-intensive and favored the urban and modern sectors of the economy while creating little direct or indirect employment (Larrea 1998:180, Larrea & North 1997:919). Believing there were greater profits to be made in the country's very small high-income market, the highlands and coastal elites who received state support for economic diversification focused their industrializing efforts on the introduction of luxury brand-name products that would appeal to

upscale clients (i.e., members of their own social class) who, like the colonial elites who preceded them, preferred imported goods over domestically produced items (Conaghan 1988:50; Corkill and Cubitt 1988:31; Larrea and North 1997:919). Once again the majority population in Ecuador was virtually ignored in the country's push for national development.

Although social conditions did improve somewhat during the petroleum boom with investments made in transportation and communications infrastructure, as well as expansion of public health and education, progress tended to be concentrated in urban areas, and even within this sector, poverty remained very high (at least 40 percent of the population) (Larrea & North 1997:921). Hoping to reallocate agricultural lands monopolized by highland and coastal elites more equitably across the population, the ruling military governments passed laws calling for land reform in 1964 and 1973. The sections that follow will show that both of these laws had only very limited redistributive effects, as large landowners allied with the powerful industrial, commercial and financial power core were able to interrupt and block implementation of even the most modest reforms (Larrea & North 1997:920, Striffler 2002:120, Suárez-Torres & López-Paredes 1997:87). As a result, agricultural activities focusing on the production of crops for domestic consumption declined sharply between 1975 and 1982, with very negative effects for small-scale, mostly indigenous agricultural producers (Larrea & North 1997:920, Suárez-Torres & López-Paredes 1997:89). Thus, those same diversifying elites in Guayaquil and Quito who historically were connected to the traditional landholding class were able to benefit from both ISI policies and agricultural modernization programs (Conaghan 1988:50, Corkill & Cubitt 1988:31, Larrea & North 1997:918-919), while the majority of the population in Ecuador experienced deterioration of their incomes and quality of life.

## Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform

One of the longstanding legacies of Spanish colonialism in South America has been the monopolization of land by a small minority of elite hacendado landowners in the highlands and on the coast. This contemporary situation is the result of an extended process of land expropriation and consolidation carried out by Spanish officials, peninsular and Criollo elites and members of the Catholic Church during 300 years of colonialism. Ecuador continues to be highly dependent on agriculture, both as the basis of export-derived national income and for the production of crops to serve the internal market and individual subsistence needs. As a project of the military state, the initial impulse toward agrarian reform in Ecuador was not catalyzed by popular calls for a more equitable distribution of landed property. Although popular pressure did play a role in the beginning of the reform process,<sup>14</sup> decisive action on the part of the military state during the 1960s ultimately stemmed from a desire to modernize the country's agricultural sector through capitalist development and to stave off the perceived "Communist threat" in the countryside (Corkill and Cubitt 1988:19; Conaghan 1988:11; North 2004:193; Striffler 2002:119–120). Agrarian reform in Ecuador had implications for the organization of social class relations that continue to reverberate into the contemporary period.

Agrarian reform efforts spearheaded by the military government in 1964 provide an example of how white landholding elites have been able to consistently block redistributive social reforms in the country. As recently as the 1990s, indigenous populations generated the

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<sup>14</sup> By the 1960s, social unrest was fomenting in the rural agricultural sector of the highlands. Some huasipungeros had been organized into the Ecuadorean Federation of Indians (FEI), which was established by the Communist Party in 1947. In 1961, between 10 and 15 thousand FEI-affiliated indigenous people peacefully took over the streets of Quito calling for agrarian reforms. Strikes and land invasions were also occurring on the coast. In response to pressure from highland and coastal landowning elites, the military's response to these sorts of popular mobilizations was active repression of popular and peasant organizations (Guerrero 1993; Handelman 1980; North 2004; Uggen 1975).

majority of produce for internal consumption but had control of only 30 percent of arable land (Crain 1990:49; Selverston 1999:7). The passage of the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law was originally touted as a program to remedy longstanding inequities in terms of land tenure in the country. The law outlawed the *huasipungo* system of indentured servitude and granted title to huasipungeros for their subsistence plots of land, with a minimum of twelve and a half acres of productive land per family (Field 1991:42; Handelman 1980:8; Korovkin 1997a:27; Meisch 1992:56; North 2004:194; Selverston 1994:138; Zamosc 1994:40). Unfortunately, passage of the law also had the unintended consequence of withdrawing access to needed resources such as water and firewood that had previously been available to indigenous farmers attached to haciendas (Korovkin 1997a:28; Selverston 1999:68; Suárez-Torres and López-Paredes 1997:88). In addition, James Bowen (2008:114–115) posits that the end of the *huasipungo* system signaled the beginnings of the end of *hacendado-peón* interdependence and this would significantly reduce the amount of leverage available to the national indigenous movement in future conflicts. Landowners were no longer dependent on servile labor, thus limiting the kinds of effects that future indigenous activism could exact from traditional hacendado elites and their interests. Discussions in Chapters Four and Five consider the continuing efforts of contemporary traditional hacendado elites to sever social obligations to their workers and surrounding communities as a strategy for increasing efficiencies in their capitalistic hacienda businesses.

While the 1964 law was successful in terms of ending legalized indentured servitude, protests and pressure from elite landowners led to last-minute revisions to the law that shifted its focus from substantive land redistribution to large scale colonization of the Oriente (Corkill & Cubitt 1988:33-34, Crain 1990:47, North 2004:194, Whitten 1981:12). The law also created the Instituto de Reforma Agraria y Colonización (IERAC), but coastal and highland landlords joined

forces to ensure that neither agricultural workers nor peasants were represented in IERAC's Executive Council (North 2004:194). The elite factions that spearheaded the opposition to the 1964 law did not anticipate that their resistance to these rather modest proposals would contribute to a second wave of more radical reform proposals and wildly successful mobilization and collective organization of indigenous groups demanding substantive socioeconomic reforms and political participation.

A second agrarian reform law was passed in 1973 by the dictatorial government of General Guillermo Rodríguez. The 1973 law also did not live up to its redistributive promises. Coastal and highland landlords, with the support of all other elite sectors in the country, once again were able to water down the draft proposals presented by the military government (North 2004:194-195). One victory of the 1973 law was the inclusion of provisions for the expropriation of lands deemed not sufficiently productive. New regulations were also included that broadened the criteria for state intervention and permitted the transfer of some hacienda lands to peasants from neighboring communities (Zamosc 1994:42). The law also had the unanticipated and important consequence of convincing many landowners to put some or all of their land up for sale rather than risk government expropriation or indigenous invasion. Taken together, the two agrarian reform laws resulted in the redistribution of approximately one-quarter of the total area of haciendas larger than 100 hectares, although the land transferred or sold to former huasipungeros was almost always of lower quality than that retained by the hacendado elite landowners (Zamosc 1994:42-43).

The two agrarian reform laws passed during periods of military rule in Ecuador, along with the infrastructure development and expansion of public services these military governments provided, laid the groundwork necessary to end the system of "ethnic administration" that, while



characteristic of the hacienda cultural complex, was actually set into motion much earlier with the initiation of Spanish colonialism in South America (Guerrero 1993:9-15, Zamosc 1994:57). Despite the minimal redistribution achieved by the 1964 and 1973 Agrarian Reform laws, the struggle for land reform spawned widespread collective action within indigenous communities, as well as the development of a collective indigenous identity. In turn, the valuable lessons and successes that emerged from these experiences acted as powerful catalysts for a highly organized modern indigenous movement working for substantive structural and ideological transformations. This movement explicitly challenges previously taken-for-granted and rigidly maintained social boundaries and ideas about racialized difference, the very boundaries and ideas that have helped to assure traditional hacendado elite cultural hegemony in Ecuador.

### **Redefining Ethnicity and Value: Collective Indigenous Resistance**

Despite the common characterization of indigenous peoples in Ecuador as “submissive,” “passive,” or “savage” (characterizations which are linked discursively to geographic points of origin), the indigenous peoples of Ecuador boast an impressive history of organized resistance to cultural domination from pre-colonial times to the present day. Becker (1992:3) argues that the Inca faced formidable opposition to their encroachment in highland region of Ecuador but were never able to completely subdue the indigenous populations on the coast or in the Amazonian region of Ecuador. Similarly, the Spanish faced enormous resistance during their attempts to penetrate the South American mainland and the highland region (Becker 1992:3). And, like the Incan conquerors who preceded them, the Spanish were never able to conquer the Indians inhabiting the Amazonian region. Indigenous resistance did not cease with the Spanish conquest or the achievement of Ecuadorian independence. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) has documented at least 145 distinct insurrections that occurred between 1533 and

1972; however, several sources suggest that it is likely that the number of undocumented rebellions actually numbered in the hundreds (Becker 1992:4; Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) 1989:285–303; Meisch 1992:56). This history of organized resistance to cultural domination, along with socioeconomic transformations resulting from agrarian reform efforts and the revitalization of traditional communal forms of governance and organization, facilitated the growth of local and regional indigenous organizations during the 1960s and 1970s. These organizations mobilized to demand access to the benefits of Ecuadorian citizenship without relinquishing their cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. This process was also assisted by the changing social and political climate internationally and the growth of Latin American social movements protesting structural inequalities within the newly independent countries in the region (Crain 1990:46–47; Van Cott 1994:6–7). More specifically, two parallel but distinct threads of external organizational assistance influenced the shape of the modern, autonomous indigenous movement in Ecuador: the traditional “Left” and progressive sectors of the Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup>

### Influences from Leftist Class-Based Movements

Class-based Leftist movements in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s attracted and successfully incorporated highland indigenous populations in Ecuador (Selverston 1999:52). In fact, Leftist influences on indigenous organizing in Ecuador can be traced as far back as 1947 when the Communist Party helped to form the Federation of Ecuadorian Indians (FEI). This was the first formal organization developed in Ecuador with an explicit mission of representing

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that the influence of external groups on indigenous collective organization in Ecuador extended for the most part to highlands-based indigenous groups and communities. Indigenous peoples in the Amazonian region continued to be somewhat geographically and socially isolated from the actions of the state until after the passage of the first agrarian reform law in 1964, at which time organization emerged from the rainforest without a great deal of external influence.

indigenous people (Field 1991:41, North 2004:193). From the inception of FEI, the alliance between the Ecuadorian Left and the country's indigenous peoples revolved around the issue of land reform. Although the semi-feudal hacienda system of agriculture was still dominant in the 1960s, it was increasingly being challenged nationally and locally. However, the relationship between the Leftist movement and Ecuador's indigenous peoples proved somewhat fragile as contradictions between the class-based ideology of the Left and the needs of indigenous communities emerged very early on in the organizing process.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the issue of land reform was an overriding concern of Ecuador's Leftist movement. It is not surprising that this focus attracted the interest and participation of indigenous persons in the highlands, whose communities bore the brunt of the exploitation inherent in the hacienda economy. Although members of these indigenous communities began to organize with the Left around the issue of land conflict, they soon realized that they had specific needs beyond land reform, such as problems of discrimination, that were not being addressed by the Leftist organizations with whom they had aligned. Indigenous intellectuals began to challenge Marxist propositions that all cultural differences would (and should) disappear with the revolution. On the other hand, most Leftist organizations at that time viewed propositions based on ethnic discrimination, in addition to class exploitation, as divisive (Selverston 1999:99, Van Cott 1994:5, Zamosc 1994:45). Moreover, indigenous participants experienced ethnic discrimination within Ecuador's Leftist movement where a racial hierarchy placed mestizo worker needs above those of indigenous "peasants" (Selverston 1999:97). These contradictions led to the conclusion among many indigenous persons that the Left was not able (or willing) to address the totality of their issues and that a movement based primarily on indigenous identity and exclusion would need to develop its own strategies. Although the

indigenous movement in Ecuador has retained many strategic elements from their early association with the traditional Left, the 1970s witnessed an explosion of indigenous organizations and federations explicitly based on an organizing principle of shared ethnic-identity (Field 1991:42, Selverston 1999:97, Van Cott 1994:5). The growth of these self-governed and self-organized indigenous organizations in the highlands region of Ecuador was also encouraged through association with progressive factions within the Catholic Church championing Liberation Theology.

#### Liberation Theology – The Church Finally Responds to Poverty

The Catholic Church of the 1960s and 1970s became an important ally of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Through their policy of preference for the poor expressed through Liberation Theology, it became increasingly involved in the reappraisal and development of indigenous culture. Where the Left had failed to recognize the internal strength of the indigenous community and the importance of land to maintaining communal ties, progressive sectors of the Catholic Church became inspired by the notion that ethnicity could be harnessed to promote grassroots, self-managed forms of development that were based on the traditional organizational framework of the indigenous community (Bebbington and Perreault 1999:403; Korovkin 1997a:28; Van Cott 1994:8; Zamosc 1994:45). Along with recognizing the need for indigenous organization in the fight for land reform, the progressive sectors of the Catholic Church offered legal advice, assistance in achieving official recognition of indigenous communities and support for provincial indigenous organizations and federations (Korovkin 1997a:29). By the late 1970s, the Catholic Church had replaced the Communist Party as the

main ally of indigenous peasant organizations,<sup>16</sup> but by the early 1970s, indigenous communities throughout Ecuador already had begun to mobilize en masse around the issues of cultural survival and ethnic discrimination. Looking inward to their communities and organizing around the principle of a common identity, indigenous people throughout Ecuador began to make cultural demands on the state that would facilitate the survival of their distinct identity. Not surprisingly, the main focus of their collective actions was access to and control of land that for so long had been monopolized by the traditional hacendado elite.

### Ethnic Identity Revalorization and Land Recuperation in the Highlands

Over the course of many generations, indigenous communities throughout the Ecuadorian highlands were forced to deal with daily occurrences of ethnic and racial discrimination within and outside of haciendas. By the 1960s, a generation of indigenous leaders articulating a deep pride in their distinct cultural identity had emerged. These leaders urged their communities to fight back against the discrimination that made them feel ashamed of being “Indian” (Selverston 1999:106, Zamosc 1994:55). The struggles against discrimination and exploitation that they advocated helped to mobilize communities in the highlands and resulted in the rapid growth of indigenous organizations (Selverston 1999:106). By drawing on resources derived from participation in state-sponsored programs of bilingual education that had aimed to assimilate indigenous children into the dominant mestizo culture by teaching them to speak Spanish, indigenous communities were able to use this education to their advantage in their efforts to revalorize a collective indigenous identity. The Spanish language skills they acquired in these

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<sup>16</sup> While all of my traditional hacendado elite consultants profess to be Catholic (even if they do not regularly practice), several families expressed deep distrust of the Catholic Church and especially priests due to the Church’s involvement in land invasions. My consultants reported that Catholic priests who “hate wealthy people and just want people in the communities to remain ignorant” spearheaded several of the hacienda invasions that their families endured.

state programs provided a point of entry into the national political system where indigenous organizers began asserting their demands as legitimate and equal citizens of the national state who were culturally and ethnically distinct from mestizos (Selverston 1999:106; Whitten, Whitten, and Chango 1997:382).

At the same time, the battle against ethnic discrimination cannot be separated from the struggle for land reform. The issue of access to and control of land is central to indigenous movements precisely because of the importance of land to cultural reproduction and ethnic identity as well as economic necessity (Selverston 1999:102, Van Cott 1994:17). Forced and indentured labor in the highlands resulted in the formation of strong generational ties to the land that indigenous individuals and families worked (Selverston 1999:7). Many people today continue to employ innovative methods such as communal land purchases that allow them to remain linked to their communities as agriculturalists, rather than becoming fully incorporated into the capitalist system of wage labor (Korovkin 1997b:107–110).

Indigenous organizing in the highlands grew exponentially following the passage of the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law, which outlawed the *huasipungo* system of indentured servitude and granted former *huasipungeros* titles to their subsistence plots of land (Field 1991:42, Korovkin 1997a:27, Meisch 1992:56, Selverston 1994:138, Zamosc 1994:40). The law was also important to indigenous communities because it formally recognized their communal ownership of land, as well as private and public ownership (Selverston 1999:114). Although the 1964 law was not particularly successful in terms of land redistribution, it did have significant positive impacts in terms of politics and collective organization. By outlawing indentured servitude, it managed to undermine hacendado bases of power and diminished hacienda control over the country's political and economic systems. This provided openings within local political arenas, which

were filled by community movements that were based on reactivated ties of kinship and reciprocity and sometimes encompassed entire provinces (Korovkin 1997a:30, Zamosc 1994:54). The role of these organizations and federations was further enhanced with the 1973 Agrarian Reform Law, which provided for the expropriation of lands that were not sufficiently productive. This article would become the basis for countless indigenous land seizures from haciendas (Korovkin 1997a:30, Selverston 1999:113). The threat of hacienda land seizure (referred to as land recuperation, emphasizing the fact that the land was stolen by the Spanish conquerors) continues to the present day and causes a great deal of discomfort among those traditional hacendado elite who have managed to hold onto some or all of their hacienda holdings. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Four.

#### The National Indigenous Movement Takes Center Stage

Ecuador's pan-indigenous organization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), was established in 1986 by the regional indigenous federations, ECUARUNARI and CONFENIAE. The intent of establishing this organization was to represent indigenous concerns at a national level and facilitate more coordinated action among the different indigenous peoples and organizations in Ecuador (Bebbington & Perreault 1999:407, Selverston 1994:139). CONAIE very quickly became the voice of the pan-indigenous movement in Ecuador. By mobilizing participants around a common identity, the organization has successfully brought together disparate indigenous groups throughout the country. One of CONAIE's central demands is that indigenous peoples be granted full citizenship rights without being required to reject as inferior their distinct ethnic identity. CONAIE is calling for the state to treat indigenous people in Ecuador as "equal but different." In fact, CONAIE asserts that the very legitimacy of these demands is based on their indigenous ethnic identity as the original

inhabitants of the country, as well as their role as the sector of the population that provides the food that sustains millions of urban inhabitants (Beck and Mijeski 2000:122; Crain 1990:49; Selverston 1999:3; Zamosc 1994:47). Several authors have written about the fact that Ecuador remains a highly stratified and ethnically divided country (Beck and Mijeski 2000; Meisch 1992; Rahier 1998; Rahier 2003; de la Torre 1999; Weismantel 2001; Whitten 1981a; Whitten 2003b; Whitten 2003a; Whitten 2004; Whitten and Torres 1998; Whitten and Corr 2001; Whitten and Whitten 2011). While this may indeed be the case, today the pan-indigenous movement in Ecuador is working to redefine what it means to be “Indian” in Ecuadorian society and demanding full participation in the state as equal citizens who are proud of their indigenous heritage. In their efforts to achieve these goals, the indigenous movement rejects the essentialized, generic form of racialized and stigmatized difference that is encapsulated in the “indio”<sup>17</sup> identity initially developed during the colonial period. Instead, the movement points to the existence of indigenous “difference” as a base of collective organization and justification for the full inclusion of indigenous peoples in the country (Zamosc 1994:58). Very soon after its inception, CONAIE sent a clear message to the nation’s elite factions that the majority indigenous, nonwhite population would no longer tolerate a status quo approach to social relations dictated by a tiny white/white-mestizo minority. CONAIE’s June 1990 Levantamiento Nacional Indígena (National Indigenous Uprising) forced all of the nation’s inhabitants, as well as the central state, to begin reevaluating the pervasive, negative stereotypes of indigenous peoples that were for centuries used to justify their exclusion and marginalization.

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<sup>17</sup> My traditional hacendado elite consultants commonly used this term in private conversations with me. However, they also made it clear that they were fully aware of the derogatory connotations associated with the term. Mónica explained to me that since the emergence of the National Indigenous Movement, “the hacienda workers are ‘indigenous.’ You cannot call them ‘indio’ anymore because it makes them very angry.”



## Rising Up to Break Down Social Boundaries

The June 1990 Indigenous Uprising made the Ecuadorian nation wake up and take notice of the growing indigenous movement. The main motive of the *levantamiento* (uprising) was to demand the resolution of more than 72 land conflicts that the Ecuadorian Agrarian Reform and Colonization Institute (IERAC) had not settled in a timely manner (Selverston 1999:158). The label given the event, Levantamiento Nacional Indígena, was chosen to highlight continuity with indigenous insurrections of the past (Collins 2000:43; Zamosc 1994:37). The uprising began on May 27, 1990 when 160 indigenous Ecuadorians occupied Santo Domingo Cathedral in the heart of the colonial portion of Quito. The protestors demanded immediate resolution of land disputes in six highland provinces (Field 1991:39; Selverston 1999:158; Whitten 1996). A weeklong protest ensued, with tens of thousands of indigenous agriculturalists ceasing to deliver their produce to towns and blocking the main highways. Thousands picketed on the roadsides and marched en masse in regional capitals. In other areas, indigenous protesters seized government offices and effected land invasions (Field 1991:39, Selverston 1999:158, Zamosc 1994:37). A variety of forms of protest were employed by the participants due to the decentralized character of the uprising, which encouraged the use of historical and traditional forms of indigenous protest and resulted in mass participation among indigenous populations throughout the country (Bebbington & Perreault 1999:405, Korovkin 1997a:36, Selverston 1998:158, Zamosc 1994:44). It would seem that such a coordinated effort of indigenous-based collective protest was virtually unimaginable to elites, and for many, CONAIE's first levantamiento reignited fears passed down since the colonial period through innumerable generations of hacendado elites in Ecuador. James Bowen, whose own dissertation research involved many of my traditional hacendado elite consultants, recently reported that one of my consultants expressed that the 1990 indigenous

uprising “took not just the government but also most of the urban upper class by surprise” because in the eyes of elites, especially traditional hacendado elites, “Indians had been relegated to the pages of the history books” (2011:463–464). Even though the overall nature of this first levantamiento was relatively peaceful, one of my elite female consultants described being wracked with terror because she was “trapped” at a family hacienda when the protests broke out, unable to leave the property because the roads were full of angry “indios,” and fearful that at any minute the hacienda house would be invaded by a marauding horde of “vengeful indios.”. Despite having cultivated close relationships with multiple generations of the families employed at their family hacienda, the moment that word of CONAIE’s levantamiento reached the hacienda, all indigenous peoples were transformed into violent, animal-like invaders who could not be trusted.<sup>18</sup> Such expressions of simultaneous fear, disgust, and indignation were repeated to me in various forms throughout my stay in Ecuador, especially during familiar conversations about personal experiences that shed light on the societal changes and tensions emerging in the contemporary period. Even the most academic and theoretical of these discussions were marked by discomfort and unease.

While the actions of CONAIE’s first levantamiento were very dramatic, the gains of the 1990 Uprising were mostly symbolic. However, this should not minimize the event’s significance. On the contrary, this first Indigenous Uprising was an extremely powerful event that signaled to the whole of Ecuadorian society that a new collective identity was in the making. This new identity had the potential to challenge and refute the negative stereotypes of indigenous

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<sup>18</sup> This first CONAIE-led levantamiento was not interpreted in such a negative light by all of the hacendado elite families with whom I worked. For at least one famous hacendado elite family, this “uprising” provided the spark that led to the development of successful and lucrative hacienda tourism ventures that are helping to reaffirm their family’s social status in the country, while also stabilizing their financial circumstances. I discuss hacienda tourism ventures in Chapter Five.

peoples in Ecuador that have been used to rationalize explicit and implicit forms of discrimination and exclusion since the colonial period (Zamosc 1994:46). Additionally, the success of the uprising stimulated the organization process at all levels of the movement, opened political space for the national movement and increased the participation of indigenous communities in the national organization (Selverston 1999:173-175).

In April of 1992, indigenous peoples from Amazonian Ecuador increased the pressure for transformation of Ecuadorian social relations and the more equitable distribution of lands and resources in the country. Aligned to coincide with events surrounding the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' encounter with the peoples of the Americas, representatives from the Organization of Indigenous People of Pastaza (OPIP) organized a peaceful protest march from their Amazonian homelands to Quito, the national capital city, to demand communal titling of 2,000,000 hectares of contiguous territory in Pastaza Province (approximately 70 percent of the province) and constitutional reform declaring Ecuador a plurinational and pluricultural state (Sawyer 1997:65). By the time that the Amazonian protesters arrived in Quito after walking 13 days, their numbers had swelled from an estimated 2,000 individuals to between 5,000 and 10,000 people representing indigenous nationalities from every region in the country and Afro-Ecuadorians (Whitten et al. 2003:187). After arriving in the capital city and presenting their demands to the President, the marchers took up residence in El Ejido Park in the modern sector of north Quito associated with urbanity and whiteness and waited for the President of the Republic to address their claims. Some Quiteños interpreted the presence of the protesters in El Ejido Park and the groundswell of support emanating from mestizo sectors of the city as sources of contamination that disrupted the carefully constructed and staunchly defended conceptions of social separation so central to Ecuadorian social hierarchy (Sawyer 1997:73-74, Whitten et al. 2003:205).

After three weeks of camping within the heart of Quito nationalist modernity, the marchers received titles to more than a million hectares of (discontinuous) lands. This represented approximately 55 percent of their territorial demands. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the government retained the rights to mineral and petroleum exploration and mining and protected the rights of colonists who were already living on Amazonian lands. Despite the fact that the marchers did not receive everything demanded from the Ecuadorian government, the material gains were impressive and once again highlighted the power of indigenous organization as a force for national change. Symbolically, the protest march and subsequent encampment in modern Quito demonstrated the solidarity between Amazonian and Andean indigenous peoples and their shared goals for social transformation and resource redistribution in the country. Following on the successes of 1990 and 1992, the pan-indigenous CONAIE expanded its platform beyond the resolution of land disputes to include specific cultural and political demands that have sometime been expressed through additional organized *levantamientos* and other collective actions, and which culminated more recently in overthrowing the extremely unpopular President Jamil Mahuad.

On the morning of January 21, 2000, nearly 1000 mostly indigenous protestors passed through a military cordon and occupied the Ecuadorian Congress Building in Quito. The protestors succeeded in taking over the Congress, in part, because they had the support of the military, which had also lost confidence in President Jamil Mahuad. The protestors proceeded to install themselves in the Congress and established a “National Parliament of the Peoples of Ecuador.” Later that morning a three-member Junta of National Salvation was declared, composed of the president of CONAIE, an army colonel, and a former Supreme Court judge (Collins 2000:40, North 2004:205, Whitten 2003a:1-2). The impetus for this radical measure

was a crippling economic recession affecting the country, which was blamed in large part on the high level of corruption permeating political institutions in Ecuador (Collins 2000:40). Although the “Triumvirate” lasted only 24 hours before the military shifted its support to the Ecuadorian Vice President, the event signaled a watershed in Ecuadorian politics and social relations (North 2004:191). In spite of enduring more than 300 years of exploitation, marginalization and demoralization meted out by highland and coastal elites in Ecuador, the most coherent and powerful mass organization and mobilization that has yet to emerge in the country was established by indigenous peoples (North 2004:205, Zamosc 1994:62). This has kept the question of land reform on the agenda even though more than half of the population is now considered urban (North 2004:205). It seems likely that rural conflict will increase in the coming years, as many of Ecuador’s elites have in the last decade increased their dependence on old and new agricultural exports, as well as the implementation of hacienda tourism ventures on lands that were previously used for agriculture, because industrial activity and revenue from petroleum exports have declined (North 2004:205). My work in Ecuador revealed that the ongoing threat of expropriation or invasion continues to haunt many of my traditional hacendado elite consultants who have managed to hold onto their lands in spite of economic losses that have been exacerbated since the 1980s by neoliberal reforms and structural adjustments in the country.

### **The Challenge of Neoliberal Reforms**

As discussed previously, Ecuador experienced tremendous economic growth in the 1970s as a result of increased production of petroleum extracted from its mineral rich Amazon rainforest. Spurred by the embargoes of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), oil quickly became Ecuador’s main export. The petroleum boom in Ecuador financed many domestic investments that resulted in improved social conditions, such as investments in

transportation and communication infrastructure and the expansion of public education and public health services. These public investments resulted in significant gains in terms of the reduction of illiteracy and infant mortality in the country (Larrea & North 1997:920-921). They also provided a window of opportunity, however narrow, for populations that had previously been all but completely ignored by the national government. However, as oil exports slowed and then stagnated in the late 1970s, both the Ecuadorian state and the private sector turned to foreign borrowing to sustain economic growth, which resulted in the country's total foreign debt increasing from \$1,263.7 million in 1977 to \$3544 million in 1979 (Huber and Solt 2004:150; Larrea 1998:180; Larrea and North 1997:920; North 2004:195; Ortiz Crespo 2000:54; Ugarteche 1999:21). Similar to the approach taken by many other Latin American countries, loans were primarily obtained through commercial banks in the developed world. This growth strategy proved unsustainable as the economic situation deteriorated in the early 1980s, leading to significant increases in interest rates, including those on foreign loans.

By the late 1980s, Ecuador and virtually all governments in Latin America faced a catastrophic economic situation: mounting international debt combined with declining trade and demand for exports (North 2004:199-200). National bankruptcy was imminent as foreign banks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank scrambled to restructure national debts. In order to pay off their high-interest commercial bank loans, Latin American countries borrowed from donor governments and multilateral agencies (i.e., the IMF, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank). These loans came with strict economic conditions, referred to as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which were designed to open up borrower economies by liberalizing trade and making them more attractive to foreign investors while also

quelling inflation and balancing the national budget (Fichtl 1999:17; Green 1999:32; Ugarteche 1999:21).

### Structural Adjustment, Ecuadorian Style

Although SAPs were designed to maintain Latin American countries' credit status in the global arena, the policies of the IMF and World Bank were quite thuggish and heavy-handed, undermining sovereignty by crippling domestic governments and rendering them unable to respond to the will of their people (Gill 2000; Orta 2004; Paley 2001; Whitten 2004). Overall, SAPs have had negative consequences for most Latin American countries, including declines in per capita GDP, increases in poverty and overall inequality, and the stagnation of national economies. To make matters worse, national governments were compelled to drastically reduce investments in public services in order to service their foreign debt (Huber & Solt 2004:155-157). Unfortunately, Ecuador's experience with SAPs has been, for the most part, equally bleak.

Ecuador began implementing SAPs in 1981 and since that time the process has been "gradual, slow, highly conflictive, selective, and still incomplete" (Larrea 1998:184). SAPs have been met with opposition from all social groups in Ecuador. The middle and lower classes have resisted measures designed to deregulate labor and to reduce the size of the public sector, wages and investment in social services,. There has been opposition on the other end of the spectrum from the dominant classes, who have resisted specific adjustment policies when their interests have been threatened. Due to the historical influence that the dominant classes have enjoyed in the realm of policymaking in Ecuador, their opposition has most often had direct results in the policy arena (Larrea 1998:184-185). Despite strong dissent, however, the rate of SAP implementation intensified after 1988, primarily as a result of deeper involvement by

international financial institutions (Gerlach 2003:84–89; Larrea 1998:184–185; North 2004:198–199).

Not surprisingly, those SAP measures that favored economic elites in Ecuador were implemented swiftly. For example, interest and exchange rate liberalization were deemed beneficial by agro-export elites and adopted quickly in the 1980s. During the 1980s, oil and food price subsidies were slowly eliminated as part of the requirement to liberalize domestic prices (Gerlach 2003:86). Trade liberalization received an enormous boost in 1990 when import tariffs were substantially reduced and most import restrictions were removed. This resulted in an immediate and dramatic increase in consumer goods imports between 1990 and 1994. Labor deregulation was aggressively pursued through the reduction in real minimum wages, and labor legislation “reforms” were designed to make Ecuador more attractive to foreign investors (Larrea 1998:185, Zamosc 1994:51). Finally, reductions in the size of the state apparatus and state involvement in the economy were also aggressively pursued from the 1980s onward. As a result, the middle class in Ecuador virtually disappeared, and the availability of basic public services, such as education and health services, declined drastically (Berry 1998:26, Larrea 1998:186, North 2004:199-200). The neoliberal assault on the newly formed middle class in Ecuador was likely a boon for unsettled traditional hacendado elites. Social mobility in the country was effectively (if only temporarily) slowed, making it easier for elites to guard the borders of their social circles. As we will see in Chapters Three and Four, even traditional hacendado elites who found themselves in economic decline were somewhat shielded from the most egregious economic belt-tightening. For example, traditional hacendado elites with waning incomes were able to their memberships in exclusive clubs due to legacy memberships passed down to each



successive generation and access to credit allowed traditional hacendado elites to borrow against their properties or even their names to subsidize their lifestyles.

### The Social Realities of Neoliberal Structural Adjustment in Ecuador

The socioeconomic impacts of SAP implementation in Ecuador have been overwhelmingly negative. Available data indicate that income distribution became more concentrated, poverty levels increased, underemployment and unemployment swelled, minimum wages fell and public social services were eroded to the point of near complete ineffectiveness (Berry 1998:14; Larrea 1998; Larrea and North 1997:913, 924–930; North 1999:7; North 2004; Portes and Hoffman 2003:44–70). In all, a vast majority of the Ecuadorian population has seen living conditions deteriorate and future options dwindle, while many elite groups have maintained, and in very many cases improved, their social and economic standing.

According to Larrea and North (1997:913), the top one percent of income earners increased their share of total income from 15.7 percent to 19 percent between 1988 and 1993, and the top 5 percent of income earners increased their share from 34 percent to 41 percent during the same period. The gap actually widens through time; between 1992 and 1995, the highest decile of income earners amassed 35 times more than the lowest decile, in comparison with a multiple of 25 between 1988 and 1989 (Berry 1997:14, Larrea & North 1997:913). Data such as these clearly illustrate that adjustment policies, coupled with historical social divisions, economic participation and political structures in Ecuador, have further concentrated market power and economic privilege among the elites. They also indicate that often-touted “trickle-down” effects of free market neoliberal economic reforms have remained elusive in Ecuador.

On the other hand, and to the great chagrin of my traditional hacendado elite consultants, the true winners in the high-stakes game of neoliberal reform in Ecuador have overwhelmingly

been members of the coastal agro-export plutocracy who were responsible for pursuing such reforms throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As in previous periods of Ecuadorian history, market liberalization policies that were the centerpiece of SAPs made it easier for landowning/landlord elites to pursue their private short-term interests, even in the midst of crippling economic crises, rather than addressing broader national interests that could have eased widespread suffering in the country (North 2004:204). Making matters worse, elites whose wealth grew as a result of their involvement with SAP implementation (i.e., agro-export elites, banking and financial elites) found it much easier and more beneficial due to deregulation and privatization policies to transfer their capital to more “secure” savings and investments outside of the country, eventually provoking a financial meltdown from which they were shielded (North 2004:204).

## **Conclusion**

It is true that some traditional hacendado elites (many of whom are my consultants) connected to coastal economic elites through marriage or business enterprises emanating from long-term social networks have also been able to tap into the wealth generated by the reforms. My consultants involved in land and business development have benefited a great deal. On the other hand, my consultants who are still primarily involved in agricultural production on their large estates have found it increasingly difficult to compete in even the regional markets, much less in the global agricultural market. Although these traditional hacendado elites are highly educated, well-traveled, and maintain vast and active social networks composed of prominent and respected elite Ecuadorians, they regularly express uncertainty about their futures, as well as deep distrust of neoliberal economic elites whose wealth dwarfs their own fortunes. Even more disturbing to my contacts is the growing sector of non-elites, individuals my contacts often refer

to as “*cholos*,” “*longos*,” or “*indios*,”<sup>19</sup> who have amassed wealth by taking advantage of opportunities stemming from an expanding informal economy (cf. Portes & Hoffman 2003). These individuals not only potentially limit the traditional elites’ ability to tap into and monopolize limited economic resources in the indebted country, but their economic power and patterns of conspicuous consumption also threaten to undermine and transform the markers of social distinction and status that have helped the traditional hacendado elite maintain their social privilege despite any waning economic power. In the next two ethnographic chapters, I take a closer look at the markers of traditional hacendado elite distinction and refinement and consider the reassertion of particular forms of comportment, customs and styles of life in the attempts of traditional hacendado elites to re-draw the social boundaries that separate them from “vulgar” economic elites, emerging non-traditional nuevos ricos (the newly wealthy or *nouveau riche*) and the “uncivilized” popular masses.

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<sup>19</sup> Both “*cholo*” and “*longo*” are words used throughout much of Latin America to describe cultural and biological admixture between indigenous peoples and mestizos or persons of European (most frequently Spanish) descent. Cholo, longo, and indio are deeply pejorative words in Ecuadorian society when used by people of a high social classes to describe their fellow countrymen and women, especially those outside of the elite social class who are highly educated and wealthy or have achieved economic wealth without educational titles (Roitman 2008; Roitman 2009; Weismantel 2001; Whitten 2003b). In this context, the words are meant to convey that the person(s) under discussion exhibit a vulgarity that is manifest in a lack of taste and refinement and is directly related to their (presumed) indigenous (and therefore inferior) ancestry. This discourse of the “other” employed by traditional hacendado elites in Ecuador is discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

## CHAPTER THREE: CULTIVATING INTIMATE WEBS OF ELITE INTERACTION AND ENCLOSURE

*In Ecuador there is at the top an elite composed of not more than a few hundred families, most of which trace their origins to early Spanish conquistadores and colonists. This group comprises the class of wealthy landholders from which the high government officials and the heads of army and church traditionally have been drawn, and from which many of the leading industrialists have more recently been recruited. Although not closed to many foreigners who are outside the system, this traditional elite is virtually impermeable to less well-placed Ecuadorians, particularly those who are of humble origin even though they may have gained considerable wealth and power. (Casagrande 1971:338-339)*

### A Pyramid of Ecuadorian Elite Power

One August evening during my extended fieldwork in Ecuador, Valeria and I left the Quito office of the hacienda tourism business owned and operated by Valeria's husband's family and walked a couple of blocks to a museum/cultural café owned and operated by one of Valeria's cousins. For several years, this café had been one of my regular haunts where I met with Valeria, as well as many other friends and consultants for evening conversation, live music, drinks and *picadas*. The café has a bohemian feel and is situated in a very desirable section of Quito, perched on an Andean mountainside with magnificent views onto the artsy Guápulo area of Quito. Valeria and I had already spent many evenings here taking advantage of the open-air roof-top seating overlooking Guápulo and beyond all the way to the valley of Cumbayá, keeping ourselves warm with *vino hervido*, and chatting and gossiping about the latest happenings in Quito, Ecuador, and the United States. Valeria is also an applied anthropologist and our friendship has deepened over the years through many theoretical discussions and debates about human experience, as well as our mutual love of all things anthropology.

But, from the start, this evening at the café was different from those that had come before. To begin with, Valeria was very pregnant with her first child so *vino hervido* wasn't an option. The evening air was especially chilly with low fog enveloping our usual roof-top space so we opted for warmer indoor seating, tucked away in a candlelit corner of the café while a single musician strummed his guitar for us. This evening was also different because our conversation moved for the first time from an abstract consideration of elite cultures in Ecuador to Valeria's subjective experiences as a member of the traditional hacendado elite social group. Before this evening, our many conversations about my dissertation work took place with the unstated implicit understanding (an approach very much in line with elite cultural norms regulating "polite" behavior) that Valeria has first-hand knowledge of the elite social experiences I have been investigating.

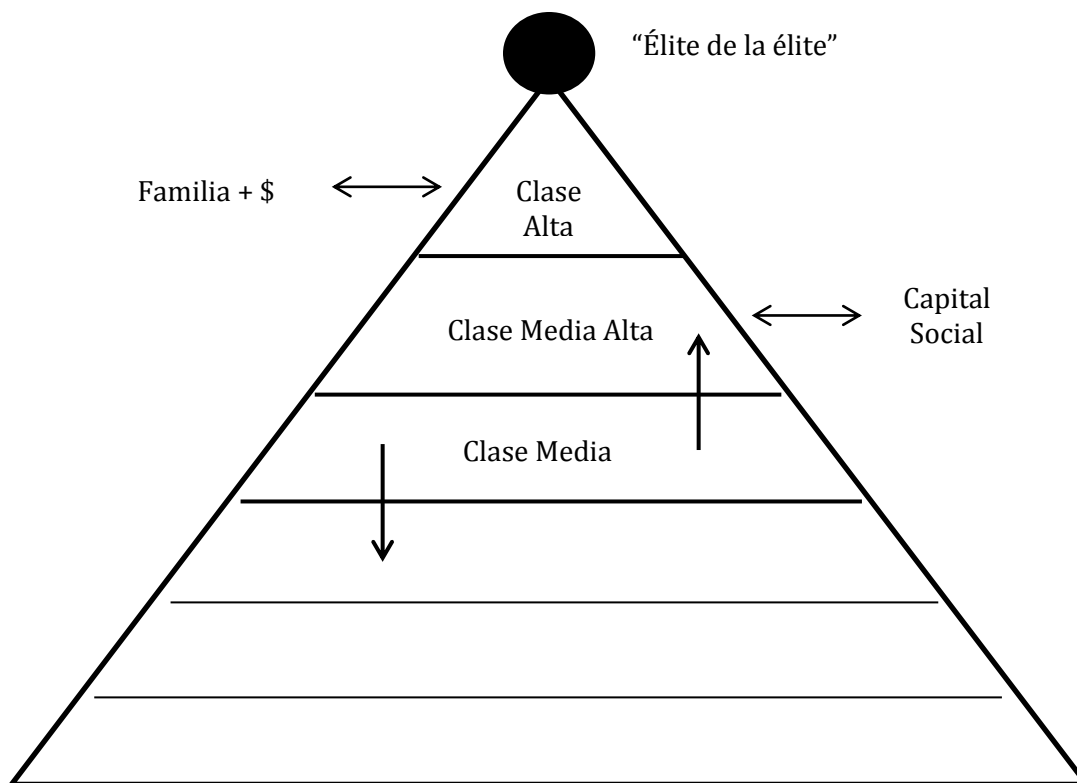


Figure 1: Consultant depiction of Ecuadorian elite stratification

Cautiously, I mentioned to Valeria that several people – not knowing that we are friends – with whom I had been discussing my dissertation research had given me her name as an example of someone within the elite social class that I should contact. For the first time in the more than five years since we met, Valeria somewhat guardedly acknowledged that she is a member of the Ecuadorian elite social class and explained the family ties that connect her to that social group. This admission opened a larger discussion about “elites” in Ecuador and how they are organized as a social group. Valeria explained that the elites in Ecuador are a “mezcla,” which means that there is a stratification of elites. To better illustrate the phenomenon she was describing to me, Valeria drew me a diagram on a cocktail napkin, which is depicted in Figure 1. Valeria instructed me to think in terms of the top portion of the Ecuadorian social pyramid,<sup>20</sup> a metaphor that has been used by many anthropologists to describe social organization in the country. At the very top of the pyramid is the “*clase alta*.” This is the “elite de la elite,” a group that Valeria compared to the Rockefeller family in the United States. She explained to me that these people have a lot of money, they come from very good family backgrounds, and they command vast amounts of social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital. This group is very, very small in Ecuador.

Next in the tip of the pyramid are the rest of the “*clase alta*” – these people have more money than most Ecuadorians, but they are especially well-connected through their family names and history. Their *apellidos* (surnames) give them much respect and social capital.

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<sup>20</sup> Valeria was most certainly aware of much of this work and this particular metaphor, as she graduated with an Anthropology degree from a prestigious private university in Ecuador that is explicitly modeled after the United States’ system of liberal arts education. She worked closely with an anthropology professor who earned a Ph.D. from a U.S university with a strong foundation in Latin American Studies and whose doctoral research was guided by a very well-known anthropological scholar with more than 40 years of sustained engagement in Ecuador.

Similar to this group is the “*clase media alta*.” The members of this group have social capital because they have money (in some cases, great economic wealth) and they can lay some claim to “las buenas familias” or “las familias tradicionales,” although not nearly as directly as the other elite groups.

Valeria went on to explain that membership and prestige are murky within each of these elite groups because people are also judged according to their line of descent. Importantly, Valeria emphasized that people considered solid members of the “*clase alta*” need not have great wealth. In fact, she reported that many have lost much or all of their economic power. However, the possession of family connections keeps them solidly anchored and fully accepted in the group of “*clase alta*.” To better illustrate the complex interplay of genealogy and economic wealth, Valeria used an example of a man we both know. This gentleman, Valeria explained, has money and a well-respected apellido. However, his connection to the well-respected family is not direct line and therefore not fully accepted by “las buenas familias.” (Another consultant, Teresa, also subsequently described this individual’s family connections to her own prominent Quiteño family. While talking to me about a painting depicting their complex family tree, Teresa pointed to a truncated branch on the tree, winked, and explained that this indicated their mutual ancestor had died without producing any “legitimate” heirs.) According to Valeria, people like this who have money will be invited to and will attend all of the elite parties but still not be considered totally inside the “buenas familias.” Valeria suggested this situation reflects a form of “elite reciprocity.” Reciprocity in this sense refers to the strategies employed by people who are elite but considered outside of the “best” families. These people will invite the elite to all of their social functions and spend a great deal of money hosting lavish events. In turn, the

invitees (from las buenas familias) are expected and obligated to then invite the semi-outsiders to their events.

Valeria patiently explained that the social group of elites is not very permeable and there is little social movement into the group if one was not born into it. She confirmed that the elite social group is very closed and close-knit and its borders are well-monitored. In her experience, exceptions are sometimes made for *extranjeros* (foreigners), who sometimes have a bit easier time being accepted into the elite social group (the tentativeness of this and similar statements made by my other consultants was never lost on this gringa anthropologist cautiously asking questions about topics typically left unspoken among “polite” company). Valeria lamented that, on the whole, being a member of the elite social group means always seeing the same people. In contrast, Valeria stated that the *clase media* tends to have a lot of movement and is interesting because members are always struggling to move up into the *clase media alta* or higher and in doing so, tend to try to mark their difference in relation to those below them in social standing.

My purpose in recounting this conversation with Valeria is to highlight that the idea that there are distinct factions of Ecuadorian elites is not simply an abstract tool used by political scientists and sociologists for conceptual convenience. It represents a social reality on which my consultants and other Ecuadorians explicitly reflect and analyze in terms of their own experiences and their subjective positions within Ecuadorian society. Elites in Ecuador, as elsewhere, are culturally situated actors. Their subjectivity is constructed by their environment and their position in the social hierarchy constantly negotiated in relation to other elites and the wider society.

Traditional hacendado elites represent one faction of elites in contemporary Ecuadorian society, a faction that also reflects a “*mezcla*,” to use Valeria’s terminology. According to



Valeria and several other male and female consultants that ranged in age from 22 to 75, these families are good examples of the variability within the *clase alta* in terms of economic and social power. Some of the families that contributed to this research lost much of their family wealth through lavish spending, land expropriation or sale or failure to reinvest and maintain productivity. Others continue to command extreme wealth, control vast tracts of productive lands, and direct new investments and diversified businesses. However, despite the disparities in terms of economic wealth, *all* of these families are considered solidly elite and members of the *clase alta*.

If wealth alone is not the defining factor that provides traditional hacendado elites access to the pinnacle of the Ecuadorian social hierarchy, what sets these individuals and families apart from other elite factions and the rest of Ecuadorian society? This chapter explores how traditional hacendado elites collectively experience and express their privilege in daily life. I explore the symbolic and material markers of distinction that characterize the traditional hacendado elite social class and signal group membership and inclusion to others. My goal in this chapter is to highlight the long-standing markers of traditional hacendado elite distinction that mark off important, and contested, social boundaries. Following Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, I examine the ways in which shared lifestyles and practices among my consultants reflect an underlying logic of inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu 1984:169–197; Bourdieu 1987:5; Weber 1958:187–190). These shared ideals and practices are representative of traditional hacendado elite *habitus*, or the acquired patterns of perception, action, and thought that connect objective life conditions with individual and collective practices. It is from this shared *habitus* that one's sense of place, and the sense of the place of others, emerges and helps to differentiate between socially sanctioned alliances and relationships and those that are “out of

place” and virtually unthinkable (Bourdieu 1987:5; Joppke 1986:27; Swartz 1997:100–108; Whitten and Torres 1998:22–23). This chapter focuses on the practices and classificatory schemes that enable traditional hacendado elites to recognize other members of this faction of elites amid the vast *mezcla* of elites who inhabit the *clase alta* in highland Ecuador, as well as an emerging class of newly wealthy Ecuadorians whose “sense of place” appears to share more in common with “el pueblo” than “La Sociedad.”

The discussion that follows also begins to consider the distinction between “La Sociedad” and “el pueblo” that was reinforced in a myriad of ways throughout my research. In exploring the concept of “sameness” among traditional hacendado elites, it became clear that group membership is predicated on an essential and implicit acceptance of *our* (La Sociedad) difference from *the masses* (el pueblo). While Chapter Four will more fully explore the expression of such sentiments of difference, this chapter introduces some of the qualities and characteristics that my consultants recognize as setting them apart from the wider population of Quito specifically and Ecuador more generally. Many of these derive from the long-standing markers of elite distinction that first took shape in the colonial period and have carried forward to the present day. By far, one of the most powerful and pervasive of these elite markers is the importance of ancestry and lineage.

### **“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”: Kinship and La Sociedad de Las Buenas Familias**

Scholarly discussions of the basis of elite status in Andean social relations have often emphasized the importance of unbroken genealogical ties that can be traced to European origins and which are maintained through a fairly strict form of marriage endogamy to elite status in the highlands (Brownrigg 1972; Gilbert 1981; Hurtado 1980; Whitten 1981b). This situation would

seemingly contradict conventional wisdom that asserts neoliberal political and economic reforms will result in a combination of economic growth and democratization that filters down to reach all sectors of society and break the socioeconomic stranglehold of the traditional elite in developing countries. Indeed, my experiences in Quito suggest that while the economic status of traditional hacendado elites may be less certain than in previous decades, social status in the highlands continues to be linked in complex and contradictory ways to genealogy and colonialism.

### History and the Importance of *Apellidos*

In daily calculations of traditional hacendado elite social status, history and lineage matter. All of my consultants in Ecuador claim a European (usually Spanish) pedigree that connects them to the colonial period; a pedigree which also helps legitimize their social classification as members of the best families, or *las buenas familias*. Being a member of “the best families” is directly related to the possession of a proper *apellido*. As Roberto explained to me one evening while I shared tapas and wine with him and his girlfriend in an outdoor café in the heart of “Gringolandia,”

It doesn't mean as much how you dress or what you buy – your *apellido* and who you know and are related to are still the most important markers of your status in Ecuador. Even if you don't have a penny but do have a good last name or are related to good names, you will wield more social power. For example, there are people with a lot of *plata* in the south of Quito and in the way north of Quito. They have earned lots of money through commerce and other business endeavors, but they do not have much social power in Quito because they aren't from the right families.

Consultants ranging from 18 years old to well over 70, many of whom continue to command vast wealth generated from diverse economic ventures, repeatedly expressed this sentiment. All

agreed that apellidos continue to be important in status calculations because they connect an individual (and family) to important figures and periods in Ecuadorian history.

Traditional hacendado elites make it a point to know their history. As they would eventually come to assert to me in the well-protected privacy of their family homes, their family histories tell valiant stories of the country's development. The elite status enjoyed by my consultants is intimately connected to the status and power monopolized by their famous ancestors. One of my consultants, Susana, explained the importance of these connections this way: "La Sociedad in Ecuador has been here since the beginning and it will continue to exist, no matter the changes that take place in the country." From the perspective of Susana and many more of my consultants and confidantes, traditional elite status is something that was born in the colonial period and clearly traced to the contemporary period through the many prestigious actions of notable ancestors.

Nearly all of my consultants spent a considerable amount of time educating me about the importance of their families in Ecuadorian history. Over the course of more than 15 months of work in Quito and countless conversations about family and history, two points about las buenas familias were clearly articulated. First, all of these families' histories began in Europe and those roots still contribute to overall social status. My consultants often treated me to displays of cherished family documents and family heralds that trace their mostly Spanish lineages to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, such as the document depicted in Figure 2. Because my consultants usually proudly displayed these materials in their urban residences and rural hacienda houses, they provided convenient (and fascinating) starting points for the retelling of family lore, especially among my older generations of consultants (approximately 50 years old and older). While we viewed family trees and various documents of pedigree, my consultants shared vivid and detailed stories

with me illustrating the historical and political prominence of their families. Secondly, the most prestigious of these families boast ancestral connections to nobility, famous historical figures and critical events in Ecuadorian history. These notable histories and the apellidos associated with them work to signal inclusion and group membership, as well as mark off a social boundary that separates members from other elite factions and the broader society.

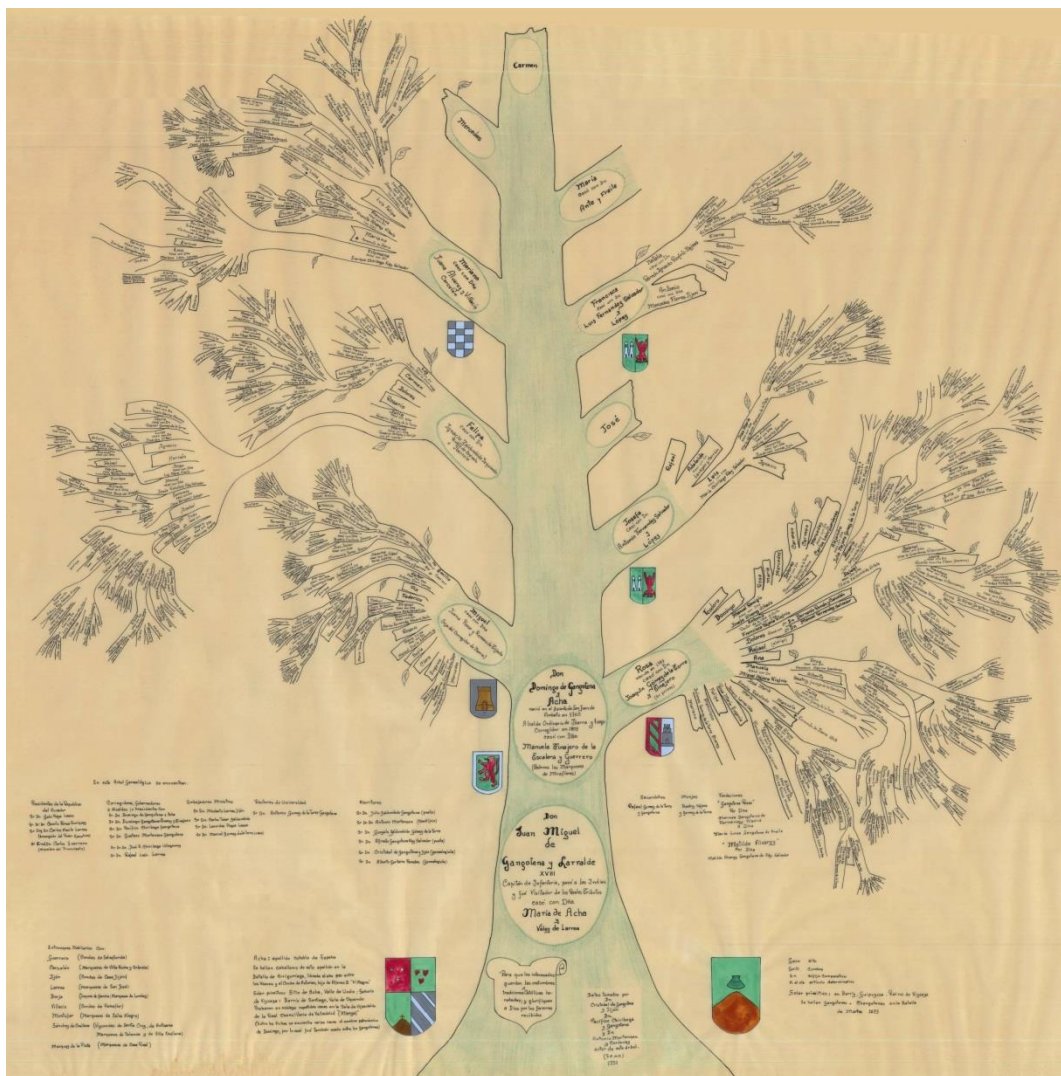


Figure 2: Traditional Hacendado Elite Family Herald

Many traditional hacendado elites in Quito make claims about the noble roots of their European ancestors. During our many casual conversations and more formal interviews about family history, we discussed countless Marquesses and Condes whose titles were personally bestowed by the Spanish monarchy. My consultants told me on many occasions that these roots, and the customs that reflect these roots, signal membership in las buenas familias today.

Patricio, one of my younger consultants in his early 30s at the time, explains:

Jennifer: Off the top of your head, can you think of any names of the really good families?

Patricio: In my opinion the really good families are like the Plazas, Mateus – you know, these families (pointing again to the genealogy chart for his own lineage). These names that you see here. And you have a lot of families that actually have ancestors with titles of nobility – there are lots of specific cases of Marques, etc. These are the best families.  
(Patricio)

Patricio was not exaggerating. Based on the materials that I have reviewed, just a few of the titles of nobility that my consultants lay claim to include the Marquesses de Selva Alegre, Marquesses de San José, Marquesses de Miraflores, Marquesses de Maenza, Condes de Selvaflorida, Condes de Casa Jijón, and Condes de Peñaflor. My consultants are proud of these titles and their European heritage, even while they express great love for la patria. The individuals possessing such titles during the colonial period wielded great social and economic power. These individuals controlled large tracts of land, as well as the large pool of indigenous labor. While the hacienda system in Ecuador has ended, these noble roots continue to be sources of great pride for my consultants. It is perhaps understandable then that I was also privy to a fair amount of gossip about the origins and subsequent inheritance of these titles. In one case, Margarita explained in very hushed tones, so that her “mestizo” driver would not overhear our

conversation, that one particularly prestigious family recently “purchased” the title of “El Conde” from a cousin who was in the direct line of descent. According to Margarita, the “true heir” was only of modest wealth (a doctor) and “even though the family [who bought the title] is muy buena, they had to buy the title of ‘El Conde.’” It would appear that the social status accrued from the possession and ongoing link to Spanish nobility overshadows any potential embarrassment from having to purchase a noble title from a close relative. According to my consultants and my own historical research, the possession of a noble heritage is a marker of traditional hacendado elite status. I should note that in some cases it appears that the link(s) to nobility cannot be sustained. However, the most important factor in these claims is truly the distinction of being able to boast a European – and especially a Spanish European – heritage. This distinction continues to mark a social boundary between traditional hacendado elites and other elite factions in Ecuador, as well as the larger population.

The ancestors of my traditional hacendado elite consultants have also made history in Ecuador. They were movers and shakers during the colonial period occupying key positions in the colonial government such as Presidente de la Real Audencia de Quito, monopolizing lands as encomenderos and maintaining positions on cabildos. Because they enjoyed the status and privileges granted to Españoles during the colonial period, they and their descendants were also well-positioned to acquire lands and property in the decades leading up to the struggle for independence. My consultants’ family histories also describe the struggles between members who remained loyal to the Spanish monarchy and those working to achieve independence from the Spanish crown. In fact, many of these tales make it clear that despite being heirs to titles of Spanish nobility, many of these families produced leaders and supporters of the Independence movement such as Juan Pío Montúfar y Larrea, Carlos Montúfar y Larrea and Manuel Ascázubi

Matheu. They planned revolutionary actions and hosted peace-making ceremonies while sequestered at their various haciendas, and the liberator Simón Bolívar was a frequent visitor at several of their haciendas homes. During our discussions about family history, many consultants shared with me copies of cherished documents demonstrating the valor and historical significance of their ancestors. This included hundreds of pages of handwritten letters between their ancestors and members of the Spanish Monarchy, famous leaders of the independence movement such as Simón Bolívar, Antonio José de Sucre and Juan José Flores and other European notables, such as Alexander Humbolt.

Of course, many of the same families also had members who were staunchly loyal to the Crown or at least neutral in opinion about the quest for independence. Because the Independence movement more closely resembled rebellion than revolution in that the leaders and supporters did not seek to drastically change the existing social and economic order, intra-familial opposing opinions were not fundamentally damaging. This is suggested in the following conversation I had with Sebastián one sunny afternoon in Los Chillos while we shared coffee and cigarettes at his palatial family hacienda:

Jennifer:        So, was your family always a central part of Quiteño society in terms of politics or social events of the day?

Sebastián:      First of all, it depends what generation you are talking about. Second, it also depends on what branch of the family you are talking about. The ... family up to my grandfather were not involved in politics. They did not take part in the wars of independence, for example. They were very influential, no doubt, but they didn't take part on either side of the wars of independence and they did not intervene in politics. At least, not directly in politics. They might have influenced some political activity through their prestige and personal influence but not directly intervening in politics. However, my grandfather was extremely involved in politics all of his life. He was director general of the conservative party from late teens until his death in 1950. He was candidate to president of Ecuador. He was the first mayor of Quito. Until 1946, people elected people for the municipal council like you elect members of congress in the U.S. and then the council would elect a president of the municipal council who acted



like a mayor of the city. However, my grandfather was the first popularly elected Mayor of Quito in 1946. In the 1930s, he was also the president of the Municipal Council for a year, so he had already acted as Mayor of Quito in the 1930s.

My grandfather married Maria Luisa Flores y Caamaño (not related to the Flores from Marquis de Miraflores). She was granddaughter of General Juan José Flores, the first president of Ecuador who was also a Venezuelan soldier. On the Flores side, they were extremely political. My grandmother's grandfather was the first president of Ecuador. One of her uncles – Antonio Flores – was president of Ecuador in 1888-1892. They were a very Republican family.

On my mother's side of the family, which is also very related to my father's in many ways because in my mother's side of the family there is also the Jijón and Larrea apellidos, but her branch of the family were extremely involved in the independence movement. August 10, 1809 – the protagonists are ancestors of my mother, as are most of the people you read about in relation to the independence movement. My grandfather was a Barba Aguirre and the Aguirres were very involved in the independence movement and they were descended from the Montúfars. (Sebastián)

Once Ecuador achieved full independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ancestors of Sebastián and my other traditional hacendado elite consultants became political leaders in the Republic of Ecuador while continuing to monopolize landed wealth in the Andean highlands and advocating social norms that were reminiscent of the Old World. My interview notes contain references to at least ten past presidents descended from two inter-related traditional hacendado elite families. Referring back to the family tree depicted in Figure 2 above, four past Presidents are noted, including Galo Plaza Lasso, Camilo Ponce Enríquez, Carlos Freile Zaldumbide and Carlos Guerrero.<sup>21</sup> A review of the genealogies for each of these individuals revealed several more ancestors who held the position of President of the Republic. In addition, the members of these

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<sup>21</sup> Reflecting back on these conversations, I note that none of these individuals expressed any interest in being in the political spotlight today. In fact, most were vehemently opposed to contemporary political participation believing it to be “dirty” and “full of corruption.” The clearest sentiment that emerged from our conversations about Ecuadorian politics in the contemporary period is that the political realm has lost all “honor” since the discovery of oil in Ecuador. My consultants link politicians today with corruption, dishonesty and a lack of educación, which does not translate as “education” in this context. Rather, my consultants feel that today's politicians are lacking in the “cradle education” that leads to “good manners, education, and the acting correctly.” In this context, educación is akin to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of incorporated cultural capital.

families have served as ambassadors and diplomats to countless countries for the Republic since Independence was won. One striking element about these posts in Europe and North America is that for most of the history of the Republic they were largely unpaid positions. According to my consultants, serving as an ambassador to the most powerful countries in the world was a job of “honor, status and prestige” but also one that sometimes negatively impacted the economic well-being of traditional hacendado elite families. Diego, a male consultant in his 30s explained how this affected his family and one of their famous hacienda homes:

My great grandfather was a diplomat in Mexico and Spain for many years so he spent a lot of money. So, when my father returned from his military academy school in Virginia, the Hacienda was completely mortgaged to the bank. My father had to work many years – like 25 years – in order to pay off all of my great grandfather’s debts. As you know, in the past diplomatic posts were more honorary than anything...you didn’t earn a salary. They were just for status.  
(Diego)

Diego’s grandfather spent his time (and money) during his diplomatic posts in Europe and North America in the manner that was expected of a wealthy Ecuadorian landowner with Spanish aristocratic roots, even if that entailed mortgaging a family Hacienda that was dear to the family and a site of historical import. Considering that each of the families with whom I worked described that multiple male family members have served (and continue to) as Ecuadorian diplomats, it appears that the status and prestige that accrues from these posts is considerable.

The discussion above has highlighted that apellidos associated with European titles of nobility and prominent historical figures are linked with traditional hacendado elite status and authority. Possessing one of these apellidos contributes historical depth and symbolic prestige to contemporary elite status. However, some of my consultants expressed ambivalence about the continued importance of apellidos in determining membership in las buenas familias and La Sociedad, which underscores the murkiness of elite status construction in contemporary Quito.

In my conversation with Valeria that opened up this chapter, she talked about a wealthy gentleman we both know who has a well-respected apellido but isn't fully accepted by the best families in Quito. I had discussed similar topics with this gentleman several weeks before my conversation with Valeria. During our informal interview, he was adamant that traditional hacendado families "de nombres" no longer have any advantages in Quito society. However, he went on to point to this segment of the population as the source for the introduction of "*la cultura*" in society and for defining the terms of this cultural complex. At various points in our conversation he reiterated that it is the possession of "*la cultura*" that defines a person's status as "old elite" in Ecuador and that possessing "*la cultura*" provides distinct "advantages" in Ecuadorian society.

Similar anxieties were expressed by Alejandra, a twenty-something young woman from "las buenas familias" in one of Ecuador's southern highland cities, who became a very close friend and confidante during my time in Ecuador. Ale and I often discussed her experiences as someone who had grown up in Quito as a member of "the best families" but now often found herself on the periphery of the Quiteño elites. I documented the following conversation about Quiteño elite differentiation in my field notes after one of our afternoon shopping trips to an upscale Quito shopping mall:

Ale told me many stories about the struggle between "*blancos*" from *las familias españolas* and mestizos who have gained some economic wealth. First off, Ale assured me that "who you are" and "where you come from" continues to be important to most of the highly placed and climbing people in society. Ale said that people from las buenas familias will never accept nuevos ricos no matter how difficult their economic situation has become over the years. But Ale went on to say that los nuevos ricos have so much money that it doesn't matter if they are accepted. I asked Ale if she thinks that this means that social relations are changing since los nuevos ricos have lots of economic power and, according to her, they are not concerned about the rejection by las buenas familias? Ale replied "no, not really, because los nuevos ricos may have money but they do not have legitimacy because they aren't accepted by the good families. This lack of

acceptance means that they don't have the connections and opportunities that come from being part of the still operating social network of las buenas familias. Being part of that network provides many benefits and opportunities, and this is why los nuevos ricos continue to strive to be accepted."

In the course of a single conversation, Alejandra asserted that "it doesn't matter" if Quiteños who have recently achieved great wealth aren't accepted by the best families but then went on to explain that without that acceptance, they lack "legitimacy" and the advantages that continue to be attached to "who you are" and "where you come from."

### **Networks of Intimacy & Privilege**

The case of Valeria and our mutual male acquaintance suggests that within elite social circles questions about "who you are" and "where you come from" cannot always be answered with a simple assessment of a person's apellido. One complicating factor is the proliferation of prominent Quiteño apellidos outside of elite lineages. Patricio explained some of the ways that this has come about and how it is addressed within elite families:

If children were born illegitimate then they were raised separately and you have families with whole branches of families that are side branches. There are families that say things like – for example, 'These are the Montúfars but these are the *other* Montúfars. Perdón.' They are illegitimate Montúfars. I think in the past they even recognized the children and raised them, but they were different...." Many of the apellidos were also adopted by indigenous and mestizo persons associated with particular haciendas or areas where traditional hacendo families exerted influence (Patricio).

Puzzling out who someone is and where they come from is a complex endeavor for an outsider, one that often left my head spinning with confusion. On the other hand, my consultants, as well as their families and friends, have perfected this process and can work out the puzzle in daily life with amazing efficiency. Their ability to assess a person's social standing in Ecuadorian society accurately and swiftly is possible because they and their families have

dedicated significant effort over multiple generations to documenting their ancestral connections to Spain and Europe, as well to other traditional hacendado elite families. Family genealogies are taken very seriously and the knowledge is passed to new generations through socialization practices, as well as casual conversation. Sebastián, who several of my consultants identified as “*muy buena*” and extremely knowledgeable about “our history,” shared the following information with me during an impromptu interview about one of his family haciendas:

The house was built by someone in the family. When you talk about family, it’s very easy when you are talking about how many children you have. But when you go back farther, it becomes more complicated and means many different branches. So, let’s first say the family on my last name side of my family, which means father, grandfather, great grandfather on the male side - the Jijóns. The first Jijón arrived in Ecuador in 1699. He came from northern Spain from Fuenterrabia; it is right next to the French border almost. He probably brought a whole set of things – furniture and such. There wasn’t too much trouble with excess baggage at the time. We might still have certain items that the first Jijón brought from Spain, but we don’t know. Except for one piece – that painting over there was brought over from Spain by the first Jijón to come to Ecuador. I have a feeling that the frame was made here because it is colonial and looks like a Quiteño frame. But the painting was brought over in 1699 and that means that it from Spain or Europe anyway and was produced sometime before 1699 – it is not signed.

But this property didn’t belong to that part of the family for a while, for like another century. This house was built in 1730 by Antonio Flores de Vergada, the Marquis of Miraflores. There are some people that descend from him and his first marriage, basically the Quinones family. His wife died and he later married another woman and I believe this house was built during his second marriage. The reason I believe that is because the house and property stayed with his second wife, as opposed to the children from the first marriage. She had lots of other things which went to the children of the first marriage, but this property and a few others remained with his second wife when he died. Her name was Rosa Velasco. The property passed afterwards to a niece of the second wife. So I believe that the house was built during his second marriage, which would postpone the date of construction about 10 years. I had always heard that it was built in 1730 but she married Antonio Flores in the 1730s so if it is true what I believe, it was probably built more like in 1740.

The niece married Manuel Larrea Jijón, the Marquis of San José. The property from the Miraflores family went to this Carrion lady who was the niece of the second wife and she married into the Larrea family. Then the property went from

her through this marriage to the son, Modesto Larrea Carrion, and he had one daughter from his first marriage to Dolores Caamaño and one son from a third marriage. The daughter ... from the first marriage was left without a mother when she was only a few months old so she went to live with the grandparents, Manuel Larrea and his wife the Carrion lady. So this property even though it went to the son Modesto Larrea, the grandmother who was the real owner, left a will saying that the property should go to the granddaughter, the daughter of the first marriage of Modesto Larrea. This young lady eventually married a Jijón and from then on the property passed to the Jijón family. This Jijón who married the owner Rosa Larrea, were the grandparents of my grandfather. So they were my great great grandparents. (Sebastián recounts each of the previous generations again.) Thus, the property has been in the family for eight generations and after me – I have grandchildren – so that will count as 10 generations. However, twice the property passed through female inheritance. First, from the Marquis de Miraflores and his wife to the niece, and then later on the niece's granddaughter who married a Jijón.

Sebastián is highly knowledgeable about his family's genealogies but even individuals who claim that they are less informed than other families exhibited impressive levels of genealogical knowledge, especially compared to my friends and acquaintances who do not generally associate with traditional hacendado elite Ecuadorians. Gabriel is a prominent businessman who is also part of a very well-respected family that has produced numerous famous ancestors and also controlled immense hacienda estates throughout the highlands. Despite being perpetually busy, Gabriel always found time in his schedule to meet with me regularly for more than a year. At the same time, Gabriel often encouraged me to meet with his various relatives to discuss genealogy because he felt his knowledge was lacking in this area. Nevertheless, during our first meeting in his office, which was unscheduled, he verbally constructed a genealogical chart that began with the arrival of one of his ancestors in the Audencia of Quito in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and concluded with his parent's generation. During our next meeting, Gabriel responded to my review of our previous discussion by hand-drawing a

pedigree chart that depicted the information he had shared verbally with me. When I expressed how impressed I was about his knowledge of family history, Gabriel responded:

My brother is much more familiar than I am about our family history. He is the one who has software that tracks the family's genealogy. My father used to talk about our family history and he was always very proud of our ancestors. My father would talk to us about these things. Through conversations we would learn about our family and we were interested in these things. So by asking questions about these things, we were able to learn about them. You know who really knows a lot about these things is my cousin. I would say that I know the least. My brothers know a lot more than me (Gabriel).

Detailed knowledge of family genealogies allows traditional hacendado elites to highlight in daily life their connections to nobility, famous historical figures, western European cultural heritage, and other prestigious traditional hacendado elite families. On numerous occasions, the sheer volume of genealogical data that families shared with me has awed me, and these data represent only a small fraction of the information that my consultants safeguard. Elite members of society who are today known as genealogical specialists meticulously documented these data over many generations. Teresa, a direct descendent of one of these genealogical specialists, invited me to the palatial estate in the valley of Cumbayá that she shares with her husband to review her late great uncle's vast collection of genealogical and archival materials. Teresa led me past the formal dining room lined with oil portraits of her and her husband's famous ancestors and downstairs to the "library" she was configuring to house all of her great uncle's materials. There I was introduced to a collection of historical and genealogical materials that dates as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and includes more than 1,000 items (Teresa had already catalogued more than 1,200 items but this included countless portfolios of primary genealogical data that she had not yet inventoried). With the notable exception of my first visit to the house and library, at least one other person seeking genealogical information that they had heard Teresa's great uncle developed about their own families always accompanied us while we

conducted research in Teresa's library. Teresa and her other guests were extremely generous in the information and stories they shared with me during those visits. In fact, Teresa and her brother-in-law sent me back to the United States with copies of detailed genealogies developed by Teresa's great uncle for 26 traditional hacendado elite families, many of which were handwritten and have never been published or shared with the Ecuadorian public.

Comments made in recent years by newly wealthy Ecuadorians (Roitman 2009) and even some of my younger traditional hacendado elite consultants have suggested that such attention to genealogical histories is a phenomenon largely associated with an antiquated past. My own research showed that the opposite is true. Instead of turning away from genealogy, many of my consultants who are in their early forties and younger are applying technology to the task of tracking family genealogies. They are entering the work developed by Teresa's great uncle and others into genealogical software that makes it even easier to trace familial connections and allows them to compare their data with the data collected by others.

Patricio, a very young Harvard MBA who worked for a large U.S. corporation before returning to Ecuador with his wife to raise their young children, shared his electronic genealogical data with me out of the blue at his office during an interview about modernizing hacienda business practices. He explained that he had put it together during one of his Harvard summer breaks because he was "bored" and decided to computerize the information his family had collected from Teresa's great uncle and other sources. Gabriel's brother, Jorge, holds a Ph.D. from a well-known university in the United States, has a number of diversified business holdings within and outside of Ecuador in addition to his job as a university professor, and invests a fair amount of time in conducting genealogical research, which he documents with genealogical software. Jorge and I spent many afternoons talking about traditional hacendado



elite history. He gave me a copy of his computerized genealogical data and encouraged me to review it and make additions to it with the information I received from other consultants. Jorge's electronic files include transcribed letters and intimate historical notes that demonstrate just how closely woven and insular this segment of Ecuadorian society continues to be. More than anything, these data and the data I collected during my fieldwork in Ecuador highlight the important role that endogamy plays in maintaining traditional hacendado elite status.

### Preserving Elite Lineages through Endogamy

Genealogical knowledge isn't only useful for highlighting prestigious familial histories. This knowledge also helps traditional hacendado elites assess and recognize potentially suitable marriage partners. As discussed in the previous two chapters, as well as in the opening pages of this chapter, traditional elites in Ecuador have historically maintained a very insular social sector, the borders of which are generally tightly guarded. During the colonial period, suitable elite marriage partners were defined, in large part, by their lineage, European heritage and de facto whiteness. As the field of elites diversified regionally over time, this preference for intermarriage continued. The practice helped ensure that wealth and property remained consolidated within the elite social sector and that elite status remained securely anchored to notions of civilization and minimal ethnic mixture (Hoberman 1986:321; Hurtado 1980:176; Mörner 1983:351; Hanson 1971:55–85; North 2004:196; Larrea and North 1997:915). Researchers interested in Ecuadorian social relations during the 1960s and 1970s (Casagrande 1971; Erickson et al. 1966; Brownrigg 1972), as well as more recent ethnographic work (Roitman 2009), made note of the traditional elite preference for endogamous marriage as a means of preserving elite social distinction. My own consultants consistently reinforced the

importance of marrying someone from the “right” family who, more often than not, has some type of familial connection:

Social climbers try to get in but La Sociedad is closed and inaccessible. (Susana)

La Sociedad se cataloga como sociedad a un grupo pequeño de familias, a un grupo de familias adineradas y que tenían un grupo muy cerrado, un grupo muy cerrado. No permitían que un hijo se case con una persona que no sea de ese grupo. (Jorge)

There is no coincidence that I married my wife. Our parents were very close friends and we have known each other all our lives. Our parents were very good friends and cousins also. My wife’s father and my father are second cousins with the same grandfather. (Gabriel)

It is both important and mostly understood that traditional hacendado elites will marry individuals who are also considered part of las buenas familias. Comments like those above and intriguing pieces of genealogical information about long-term social endogamy (including many instances of first cousin marriages and uncles marrying their nieces) that my consultants shared motivated me to delve deeper into the genealogical data that I collected and compiled.

Beginning with Jorge’s electronic genealogical data and adding to it with information gathered from numerous other families, I was easily able to calculate the many familial relationships that exist between most of my consultants. Information obtained through formal interviews, casual conversations and participant observation had already alerted me to perceived and actual kinship relations. Even so, the results of my “relationship calculations” were eye-opening. Consider Gabriel – by his own admission, his and his wife’s parents were very close and somewhat related. When I queried my genealogical software about the familial relationships that exist between Gabriel and his wife, Teresa, I learned that in addition to being spouses they share at least 18 other points of familial relationships (see Table 1). These include being third

cousins through three separate relatives, fourth cousins through four individuals, and related in several different categories through a single individual. Running the same type of calculations between Gabriel and his uncle's wife, Cecilia, I learned that they share 14 other points of familial relationship besides that of nephew and aunt (see Table 2). While the genealogical data that I have compiled to date is inconsistent in its depth across all of the families with whom I have been working, I receive similar types of results with each new relationship calculation query.

**Table 1: Gabriel's Familial Relationships to Wife Teresa**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Common Ancestor</b>
Third Cousin	Antonia
Third Cousin Once Removed	Modesto
Third Cousin	José
Third Cousin	Rosa
Fourth Cousin	Francisco & Joséfa
Fourth Cousin	Joséfa
Fourth Cousin	Joséfa
Fourth Cousin	Francisco & Joséfa
Fourth Cousin	Carlos & María
Fifth Cousin	José María & María
Fourth Cousin Once Removed	Domingo & Manuela
Fourth Cousin Once Removed	Domingo & Manuela
Sixth Cousin Once Removed	José & Rosa
Sixth Cousin Twice Removed	José & Teresa
Fifth Cousin Once Removed	Joaquín
Sixth Cousin	Felix & Clara
Seventh Cousin	José & Teresa
Eighth Cousin	Juan & María

**Table 2: Gabriel's Familial Relationships with Aunt Cecilia**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Common Ancestor</b>
Nephew	Alfonso & Beatriz
Third Cousin	Modesto
Third Cousin Once Removed	Francisco & Joséfa
Third Cousin Once Removed	Joséfa
Third Cousin Once Removed	Joséfa
Third Cousin Once Removed	Francisco & Joséfa
Second Cousin Twice Removed	Modesto
Sixth Cousin	José & Teresa
Fifth Cousin Once Removed	Felix & Clara
Fifth Cousin Twice Removed	José & Teresa
Seventh Cousin	Juan & María
Sixth Cousin Once Removed	Eugenio & María
Sixth Cousin Once Removed	Eugenio & María
Fifth Cousin Twice Removed	José & Rosa
Sixth Cousin Twice Removed	Juan & María

Some of my most intriguing discussions about endogamous marriage preferences were with my younger, twenty-something female and male consultants. One afternoon while shopping in the valley of Cumbayá with Valeria and her younger sister Lorena, our girl talk turned to marriage and how “interesting” (read “odd”) it was that a woman my age was not yet married. We were joking about the different men I had dated in recent years when Lorena exclaimed somewhat exasperatedly that marriage in the United States and Europe is “so much more open than in Ecuador – people are free to marry whoever they want!” Valeria disagreed and patiently explained her belief that the same pressures exist within the upper classes in

Europe and the United States to marry within one's own social group and race.<sup>22 23</sup> Social endogamy does have its drawbacks. Many generations of intermarriage within a small social group that includes marriage between cousins and other relatives has in some cases resulted in cognitive disabilities and other genetic ailments. One method employed to combat this possibility is to marry individuals from prominent families outside of Quito. As Patricio explained, this option addresses concerns about elite marriage preferences while expanding the web of potential marriage partners:

I definitely think that clear lines between social groups still exist. My wife had to pass the family test and I had to pass the family test as well. She is from a prominent family in Loja and her father – my father-in-law – is Italian from Italy. It's funny because it doesn't matter where they come from in Europe – they could be from the worst family in Europe – as long as they are European, it is okay. There are prominent families in Loja and it is a very small place. There, prominent families either went out and married people from Quito or elsewhere or they married within the prominent Loja families. Since this was such a small sector, there were lots of problems with inbreeding. I think that Quito was like that too – either you married someone you didn't like because they were part of the social circle or you married your cousin. I think it is changing over time but it still definitely exists. (Patricio)

### Acceptable Outsiders

I do not intend to suggest that traditional hacendado elites always marry within their own social group. I am aware of several recent instances of marriages that have taken place with individuals from families outside of the clase alta. At the same time, none of these marriage partners would be considered far removed from las buenas familias but rather solidly part of the

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<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that Valeria and her husband are distant cousins. Lorena has been dating a brother of Valeria's husband for several years. Valeria's mother-in-law is somewhat directly related to Gabriel's wife, Teresa. And, as discussed above, Gabriel and Teresa are closely related to one another. Gabriel is a cousin to Maria. One of the brothers of Maria's father-in-law is married to Gabriel's sister. The list goes on and on.

<sup>23</sup> This was one of the first conversations with my consultants where we explicitly discussed "race." As time passed, I found the topic of race reappearing over and over again in discussions about marriage and intimacy, as well as business and development.

group that Valeria characterized as “clase media alta.” However, many of these marriages ended in divorce, and those that were still in place seemed to remain on the margins of the traditional hacendado elite social circle. As Patricio alludes to above, the pressures to marry within the small elite social group are also alleviated by acceptance of Europeans (as well as people from certain sectors of the United States and other Latin American countries) as legitimate marriage partners. Manuel, Susana and I spent one warm August afternoon talking about “the continuing love of all things foreign” among Ecuadorian elites.<sup>24</sup> Manuel recounted that his father came to Ecuador as a poor Spaniard without anything except his Spanish ancestry and a glass engraving machine. However, because Manuel’s father was European (from Spain) he was instantly popular with the upper echelon in Quito, all of whom “wanted him to marry their daughters.” Manuel’s father ended up marrying into a well-connected family, and his fortunes began to rise. His European ancestry provided symbolic capital that translated into social capital (access to the network of elites) and later led to increased economic capital (“everyone wanted to buy their glass from the Spaniard”).

While extranjeros may have an easier time entering the small social circle of traditional hacendado elites in Quito, full acceptance is often elusive. Manuel’s case is similar to many others I encountered in Quito. Manuel, like most of my consultants, attended private *colegio* (high school) at the Colegio Americano. The school was established and owned by Galo Plaza Lasso and is still considered one of the premiere colegios where elites, and especially landed

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<sup>24</sup> I experienced this phenomenon first-hand. My entrée into the traditional hacendado elite social circle in 2001 was as a girlfriend, rather than a researcher. Whatever acceptance I was granted by members of this social circle was facilitated, I believe, by my status as a white, middle-class, graduate student from the United States. My ex-boyfriend introduced me to many of the people who would eventually participate in this research. Although our romantic relationship was long over by the time I initiated my dissertation research, his family and friends continued to open their homes, offices and social experiences to me and my incessant questions. In return, I also faced many questions about my life experiences in the United States and abroad, as well as my own family’s fortunes and prospects. More than once, family matriarchs and patriarchs queried me about my thoughts about their single sons.

elites, send their children. There Manuel met and became friends with many of the children from the Sierra's most influential families in the Andean highlands. Manuel volunteered that as the son of a "European migrant" he was accepted, for the most part, but because he wasn't from the landed class of Ecuadorians, he never felt like he was *completely* accepted. Manuel also related to me that many of the "migrant" children in school and within that social circle felt the same and that they have tended to gravitate to one another. In fact, Manuel eventually married an Ecuadorian woman who comes from a German European background. From my perspective, Manuel remains solidly part of the elite in Quito. He is well known for his sports prowess at the local elite clubs, interacts socially and professionally with a network of the most prominent traditional hacendado elite families and is directly related to one of the wealthiest "modern" elite families within the "elite de la elite," to use Valeria's words. And yet, Manuel continues to feel a lack of full acceptance by traditional hacendado elite families due to his father's status as an "extranjero."

The above discussion intends to illuminate that some points of permeability do exist in traditional hacendado elite social boundaries. Access is sometimes granted to certain types of foreigners, especially those of European descent. Marriage also occurs with members of the upper middle classes (*clase media alta*) who are able to demonstrate some familial connections (however distant) to *las buenas familias* and exhibit certain forms of cultural knowledge that are recognizable to and highly valued by traditional hacendado elites. I explore the relationship between this shared cultural knowledge and elite discourses of difference in Chapter Four. However, at this juncture I want to emphasize that while some latitude about potential marriage partners does appear to exist among traditional hacendado elites, there are boundaries that remain mostly impermeable. None of my consultants – young or old – considered people with different

ethnic or racial (often characterized as “cultural”) backgrounds viable candidates for marriage. Such a marriage remains outside of the expressed realm of “common sense” (Bourdieu 1989:19). My consultants sought to communicate the nuances of acceptability to me by offering the example of Tomás López, a well-known businessman who attended elite schools with many of my consultants. López made a considerable fortune in petroleum and banking before fleeing the country in disgrace in the wake of Ecuador’s financial crisis in late 1990s. López eventually was sent back to Ecuador where he was tried for fraud and served time in an Ecuadorian prison. Upon his release from prison, López resumed work in the petroleum extraction industry in the county. He and his family members are regulars in the Ecuador society pages, often appearing in photos from polo matches around the globe. López holds multiple prestigious educational credentials, moves in distinguished social circles and continues to command economic capital. And yet, many of my consultants referenced the López family when discussing marriage partners who would be completely unacceptable. Daniel explained:

“Being from a ‘good family’ isn’t based on economics. An example is the family of Tomás López. That is a very rich family but they are totally not accepted and known to NOT be ‘good family.’ They come from more humble backgrounds. I am friends with one of the Lópezes. My father knows Tomás and they get along well and are friends. But if I were to have a girlfriend or fiancé that was one of them, that would be *a big issue*. If you are friends, that is fine but if you are going to marry someone, then that is *different*.”

The “humble background” that Daniel referenced had been the subject of previous discussions with other consultants. From them I learned that Tomás’ mother was a mestiza market woman, a “*chola*” according to Fernando, Teresa and Manuel, or a “*longa*” according to Margarita. Tomás’ mother made some money through her hard work at the market, and she invested her earnings in her children, ensuring that they received quality education alongside the children of Ecuador’s elite. But no amount of schooling or cultural training was enough to erase



the “stain” (*mancha*) of the Tomás’ humble – and explicitly mestizo – beginnings. Social endogamy helps to ensure that the traditional hacendado elite social faction remains both culturally and racially “white.” Given that most census estimates of Ecuadorian ethnic/racial groupings suggest that only 10-15 percent of the population consider themselves “white,” it can be assumed that the social circle of traditional hacendado elites is likely quite small, as Valeria so eloquently described during the discussion that opened this chapter.

### Intimate Social Networks

Soon after I began my extended fieldwork in Ecuador, I received an invitation to visit Hacienda Zuleta, a famous hacienda located about 100 kilometers north of Quito. Zuleta is owned by the descendants of Don Galo Plaza Lasso, a prominent hacendado and one of Ecuador’s past presidents known for his progressiveness. I traveled to Zuleta to meet with family members and to discuss the growing exclusive hacienda tourism business that the family operates out of the hacienda house. After a four- hour bus ride and another hour in a taxi owned by the hacienda’s former mayordomo<sup>25</sup> (administrator of the hacienda), I arrived at the house and was greeted by one of Galo Plaza Lasso’s grandsons. After a brief meeting and tour of the main house, my host suggested that I join a group of visitors in the main dining room for lunch so I could “experience the house.” Lunch at Hacienda Zuleta ended up being similar to many meals that I shared with my consultants. Hacienda employees from the local indigenous community clad in traditional hand-embroidered dress served me, along with four other guests and the hacienda “host,” four courses of foods considered “traditional” within hacendado elite homes, including papa de loco soup. This lunch encounter provided a very early glimpse into the

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<sup>25</sup> Miguel’s father and grandfather had also served as mayordomos for the hacienda.

intimate social network of traditional hacendado elite families that has resulted from many generations of social endogamy. It helped me understand my consultants' many subsequent expressions lamenting that "Quito is a such a small town," and "La Sociedad is very small – Ecuador is a tiny country but La Sociedad is even tinier." The passage below is excerpted from my field notes:

I ate lunch with four visitors from the United States (Houston area). The visitors were Rita (from Quito originally), Thom (husband of Rita), Mary Lou and her husband Eric. Thom talked to me about his and Rita's years living in Ecuador. He worked for NASA at Cotopaxi. He told me how he had met presidents and countless other prestigious Ecuadorians due to Rita's family being so well-connected in Ecuador. Rita's family has farms/haciendas south of Quito. Rita's father was the mayor of Quito twice. During lunch, Rita started telling us stories about her grandfather with the last name "Anderson." This name, the stories about her quirky grandfather and the discussion of her family's connections made me wonder if she is related to Daniel's mother, Margarita. When I asked, Rita said that she is Margarita's first cousin! Rita's husband is the godfather of Daniel's sister, Susana. What a crazy coincidence that I would meet them at Hacienda Zuleta! (May 20, 2006)

Little did I know at the time that this type of encounter would happen repeatedly throughout my stay in Ecuador. To a gringa like me, Quito does not feel like a "small town." In 2005, the capital city boasted an estimated population of more than 2,500,000 people spread over 125 square miles. However, when one travels in a tightly woven elite social circle such as Valeria and others described to me, the city and country certainly feel small at times and as though one "sees the same people" wherever they go. Over the course of five research trips lasting more than 19 months, I had the opportunity to accompany my consultants on travels throughout Ecuador. During all of this travel, there was not a single time that we did not run into another member of their tight social network. (Upon questioning my companion(s), I typically learned about the complex familial and fictive kin relationships connecting them to one another.)

Because kinship plays such a central role in marking traditional hacendado elite status in Quito, much social networking takes place in the private sphere that remains relatively closed to most outsiders. This separation from the rest of society is a phenomenon initiated during the colonial period when Españoles and Criollos actively cultivated social boundaries based on conceptions of perceived difference (recall Chapter One). My consultants have had access to resources and experiences that remain outside the bounds of possibility for most Ecuadorians. This access has all but guaranteed that their daily lives mostly intersect with individuals who have similar family histories, lifestyles and social experiences. They have spent much of their lives together marking important familial and social rites of passage. In many cases, my consultants continue to pursue business opportunities together much like their ancestors did. Having spent their lives together establishing and maintaining bonds of kinship and friendship, such partnerships seem almost inevitable:

I've known Modesto all of my life. We are not only business partners, but also very close friends who spend a lot of time together outside of work. We and our wives socialize together often. We belong to a very tightly knit group of friends who have been close to one another since we were children. For the most part, all of our parents are friends or acquaintances who also socialize together. (José)

I heard countless stories that mirrored that of José and Modesto – my consultants travel within social circles that were initiated long before their births and reproduced through generations of parents and children. Life-long bonds of friendship are often strengthened by familial ties that have been reinforced through generations of intermarriage and social practices that continually bring my consultants into contact with other “good families” from the same social class. While most of my consultants sought to downplay the purposeful spouse or friend selection, many of my younger consultants expressed frustration about their parents’ consistent questioning related to their friends:

A person's pedigree is still important. The first thing that my mother has always said to my friends is "whose child are you," or something similar. It has always really bothered me that my mother asks those types of questions. I recently questioned her about her motives for asking those questions and my mother responded that she wants to know if their mothers are friends of hers. I told her that she acts like she knows *everybody*. Her response to me was, "But, I *do* know lots and lots of people." (Valeria)

Susana is from a traditional hacendado elite Quiteño family and her husband is from a prominent hacendado and oil family in Cuenca. Susana has teenage children and provided a parent's perspective on this topic:

I have never told my children who to be friends with or who not to be friends with, but for some reason 80 to 90 percent of their friends are the children of my friends. I believe this is because they see each other in school - first at Colegio Americano and now at Colegio Meñor - and in other social events for their whole lives. (Susana 2006)

Thus, genealogical "interviews" continue to be common in traditional hacendado elite social life. These discussions, which often include some explicit and intentional name dropping,<sup>26</sup> are part of the not so subtle screening process that occurs when friends are invited into family homes or introduced into other social contexts. I will revisit this topic in the next chapter and address how traditional hacendado elite social network preferences link to racialized ideas about difference. At this juncture, I simply want to emphasize the ongoing preferences and their reinforcement through cultural institutions such as education and shared styles of life. Whether intentional or not, this social group endogamy is assisted by mutual engagement in social practices and

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<sup>26</sup> I was not immune to this process. I received constant coaching from my consultants about names that I should mention to newly identified potential research participants. My consultants not only actively encouraged meetings with new participants but often laid the necessary groundwork for me "behind the scenes" that opened doors that typically remained shut to outsiders. I, too, was regularly subjected to genealogical inquiries, even though the chances of my consultants having knowledge of my family heritage or background were exceedingly slim. While I was almost always offered an initial meeting, some of the individuals with whom I worked were distrustful of my motives and disapproving of my topics of discussion. These individuals warned many of my consultants about becoming my "cuy" (guinea pigs).

activities that constantly bring social group members into intimate and familiar contact with one another while also delineating the boundaries that separate them from others, including rite of passage events, social clubs and education. These material and symbolic style of life markers are the subject of the remaining sections of this chapter.

### **Geographies of Power & Spaces of Progress**

Pierre Bourdieu wrote at length about the symbolic dimensions of social class and the ways in which consumption and “lifestyles” serve to categorize and rank a social class’ relation to other classes or class factions. For Bourdieu, lifestyles represent “...practical expressions of the symbolic dimension of class relations” (Swartz 1997:163; Bourdieu 1984). Lifestyles reflect aesthetic preferences and patterns of consumption that are internalized in distinct class habitus and result in social collectivities. These aesthetic preferences and patterns of consumption reflect material differences in the actual volume and composition of capital but are experienced and represented socially as symbolic distinctions of difference (Bourdieu 1984:176; Swartz 1997:178–179; Weininger 2002:133–136). Furthermore, these seemingly quotidian acts simultaneously function to symbolically articulate social similarities and social differences, as well as notions of social group inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu 1984:479; Swartz 1997:185). In Ecuador, the consumptive practices and ideas about “taste” that underlie hacendado lifestyles help to mark off the social boundaries that separate traditional hacendado elites from other elite factions and the Ecuadorian masses. The remainder of this chapter explores aspects of traditional hacendado elite lifestyles that most clearly function to reinforce social exclusions first introduced during the colonial period, while also underscoring inclusion in elite social circles.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of hacendado elite lifestyle that I experienced in Ecuador was a distinct sense of social separation. Implicit messages about “who is in and who is out”

abound in daily practice and casual discourse. These determinations are relational and, as such, tended to be flexible and malleable according to the social context and audience. However, a deeper chasm can be felt between traditional hacendado elites and the masses, which my consultants often referred to as “el pueblo.”<sup>27</sup> This separation is, of course, not new to Ecuador, having been the norm during the colonial period, formalized with the Spanish Toledan Reforms and also a central component of the Sociedad de Castas. Symbolic and material exclusions helped structure daily life during the ethnic administration that prevailed during the hacienda era in highland Ecuador. Today, this social separation is not only maintained through kinship, but also through daily practices and styles of life that bring my consultants together with other members of this elite faction while keeping symbolic and literal distance from the masses of Ecuadorians who surround them.

As I carried out my research in highland Ecuador with my traditional hacendado elite consultants, I was painfully aware of my own liminal position, hovering on the peripheries of their social spheres – not fully ensconced but never relegated to the distant margins of society where “the masses” dwell. From my own tenuous position, it was often quite easy to recognize that my traditional hacendado elite consultants are seemingly oblivious about the rest of the country. They carry out their daily lives in ways that allow them to exist within the masses without actually seeing the masses. Because their social and professional lives continue to revolve around kinship and long-standing social networks, their lives tend to unfold away from those outside of their elite social circle. Marco, one of my traditional hacendado elite consultants who is also an author and a journalist, described the chasm to me: “There is a big disconnect

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<sup>27</sup> Here my consultants are juxtaposing “el pueblo” (the people, the village) with “La Sociedad,” the dominant minority of Ecuadorian elites who are distinguished by their possession of economic capital and cultural capital.

between elites in Quito and the rest of the country. People don't know what is happening outside of Quito. There is tremendous snobbery in that elites go to the club and to Miami but don't know anything about the rest of the country." This type of social and physical separation from the larger society has a long history in highland Ecuador, harkening back to the colonial period of two separate republics that formalized the split between the Republic of Españoles and the Republic of Indios (Spalding 1984:158). Many of my elite consultants in Ecuador actually acknowledged the apparent social separation between themselves and the rest of non-elite Ecuadorian society and the similarity of their descriptions to colonial ideologies of difference and bases of distinction are unmistakable: "Sí, el indígena era también tenía su sociedad pero era una sociedad un poco pobre" (Jorge). For Jorge and others, the divisions that separate the elites who occupy the "las buenas familias" from "indígenas" and mestizos are natural (it has always been this way), cultural ("they live differently than us") *and* economic (indigenous society is "poor").

None of this is to suggest that my consultants are somehow un-Ecuadorian. On the contrary, most of them display a genuine love of "*la patria*." However, as during past periods, Ecuadorian elites continue to define "*la patria*" and its needs in terms largely foreign to the majority of the population. Elites in Ecuador have a long history of thinking about the nation in their own terms, without reference to the majority population that surrounds them. They accept elite social and economic privilege as a natural outcome of their highly cultured Western ideals, historic innovative entrepreneurialism and continued alignment with global capitalist modernity. This is in direct contrast to the values and popular ideals of "*el pueblo*," which are considered vulgar and provincial. This division between elite conceptions of "*la patria*" and "*el pueblo*"

extends into the daily practices that define “legitimate culture”<sup>28</sup> in Ecuador. By and large, traditional hacendado elites are cosmopolitans who identify with styles of life and customs that often are more similar to those of the United States and Western Europe than to “popular” Ecuador.<sup>29</sup> It is at this point of articulation that the role of economics begins to come into view. Even if one accepts the assertion made by Valeria and many other traditional hacendado elite individuals that economics do not dictate who belongs to the “clase alta,” it is also true that all of the traditional hacendado elites with whom I worked and socialized are financially much better off than most of the Ecuadorian population. Among those families that Valeria might have characterized as having more cultural capital than economic capital, it is very easy to note stark differences between their styles of life and those of the wider Ecuadorian society. Symbolic and cultural social divisions in society are at least partially sustained by economic disparities wherein traditional hacendado elites continue to enjoy a standard of living that is considerably higher than the majority population. One of the most obvious articulations of this interrelationship is within the realm of land and property.

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<sup>28</sup> Pierre Bourdieu discusses the realm of “legitimate culture” and social struggles over its content extensively in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). In a discussion of Bourdieu’s analyses of social class and symbolic violence, Elliot Weininger defines Bourdieu’s concept of “legitimate culture” as “...those elements of culture universally recognized as ‘worthy,’ ‘canonical,’ or in some other way ‘distinguished’” (2002:137). Bourdieu stressed that while styles of life are arranged hierarchically according to their proximity to legitimate culture, the content of what is considered “legitimate” in a society is a source of constant social struggle.

<sup>29</sup> This complicated my early field research to some extent because I often found myself with my consultants in situations so familiar to me that I hardly took note of what was going on around me. In other words, participation in some tasks was exceedingly simple because they almost entirely replicated tasks that I perform at home, like grocery shopping in a supermarket, having highlights and lowlights put into my hair at the salon or competing for party favors awarded in strange baby shower games. In those moments, the observation portion of my research was nearly subsumed by the familiarity that I felt. It wasn’t until I stepped back out into the street or stuffed my body into an impossibly small space in an overcrowded trolley that I was reminded these familiar activities were taking place in a very specific, and contentious, context that called for some reflexive analyses to attempt to get beyond the lens of my own personal gringa experiences in the United States.



## Landed Privilege

Given the historically based symbolic and material importance of haciendas in the construction of economic dominance and social status in the highlands, it is perhaps not surprising that a substantial amount of conversation with my consultants revolved around land and property. The possession of land and property has long been a defining feature of traditional hacendado elite privilege. The monopolization of land (and labor) in highland Ecuador helped a small segment of the population accrue significant economic and symbolic capital. The extended families of all of my traditional hacendado elite consultants owned large haciendas in the past and many continue to possess hacienda homes and lands today. This is a characteristic that makes individuals recognizable to one another, as they are quickly connected to hacienda histories during the genealogical interviews that take place in daily life. Family histories are inextricably linked to movement of lands and property between the closely knit circle of hacendado families. Possessing hacienda lands is still a mark of distinction that contributes to the internal elite segmentation that I discussed at the opening of this chapter. The privilege that has accompanied this historical stranglehold on land also clearly sets traditional hacendado elites apart from the majority of the Ecuadorian population, even if they no longer lay claim to vast holdings. As Marco explained, this is because “the traditional elite families still command social respect. The masses have “*admiración secreta*” for the traditional elite. Many people still want the prestige that comes with owning lands and the “*simbolismo*” of the hacienda. People still envy that prestige. The traditional elite may not have much political or economic power, but they still have social power and prestige.” A large part of the “*simbolismo*” of the hacienda that has been carried into the present day and was repeatedly articulated by my elite consultants are images of an idyllic and leisurely past that was largely devoid of conflict or social unrest.

Regardless of the present landowning status of my consultants' families, our conversations about land and property were tinged with romantic nostalgia for the hacienda as a social and cultural institution. As I discussed in the above sections, my traditional hacendado elite consultants expressed pride in their Spanish-European roots and hacienda heritage. Consider the romantic imagery in the following passage excerpted from *La Hacienda*,<sup>30</sup> an out-of-print book written by members of las buenas familias and consistently referenced by my consultants (the publication showcases their families and haciendas):

*Las haciendas estuvieron desde siempre asociadas al poder. Los nombres de las familias, la influencia de caudillos y marqueses, la fama de hacendados y políticos se apoyaron, desde los remotos años coloniales hasta bien avanzado el siglo XX, en el señorío de la tierra, en el lustre que dió a las élites vivir en el campo – en casa grande de tapial y teja -, desde donde gobernaron a chagreras y peonadas y muchas veces a países enteros. Los hacendados vistieron con orgullo, sobre las prendas europeas, el poncho de castilla y hablaron en quichua desde la altura del caballo, con el acento distinto de su castellano originario.*

*El hacendado y la hacienda son testimonio de raíces que vienen desde la Conquista, se prolongan en la Colonia y llegan hasta estos días. Las haciendas y las familias que en ellas vivieron fueron parte de esa historia de la vida cotidiana; fueron el escenario donde dos culturas desarrollaron el drama de la gestación de naciones diferentes. Fueron, en fin, el germen y la matriz de una estructura social. (Corral Burbano de Lara et al. 1996:5)*

The link between European heritage, social power and South American nationhood is explicit in the above passage. The view of the *La Hacienda* is romantic and pays homage to a way of life that many of my consultants still consider virtuous and honorable. As during colonial days, my consultants' lives were, and are still, split between their urban residences and their properties in “el campo.” I had countless conversations with my consultants about hacienda life.

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<sup>30</sup> One of my consultants in Quito gave me one of the last, unsold copies of this book as a gift. The publication is full of beautiful color photographs that show the variety and grandeur of Ecuadorian haciendas. Many of the photographs depict “peones” and “patróns” working and experiencing hacienda life. While “patróns” are always identified by their personal names (e.g., Don Mario, Don José María, etc.), the personal names of “peones” are never used. Rather, these individuals are simply referred to with terms such as “peón,” “chagra” or “mayordomo.”

Margarita was fond of pointing out all of the areas throughout urban Quito and Los Chillos that used to belong to her husband's family. These conversations almost always transpired in loud whispers so that the family's "*cholo*"<sup>31</sup> driver couldn't "hear all the details" (Margarita was sure that his "envy" would result in some nefarious outcome). Margarita and many others spoke to me about weekends and holidays spent at haciendas within easy travel distance to the city. The haciendas were relatively close to one another; large groups of interrelated friends and family would travel during the day on horseback from hacienda to hacienda. Evenings often revolved around lavish parties or "cocktails." None of my consultants – older or young – ever discussed carrying out any work on the haciendas beyond management of the household and agricultural workers. Many of the haciendas were "country homes," and the huasipungeros and workers attached to the properties attended to my consultants' daily needs. Most of my consultants spent the summertime and longer vacations in "el campo" at haciendas much farther from urban Quito and the network of kinsmen and social comrades. During these times, my consultants passed their days riding horses, studying with tutors and sometimes playing with the children of the haciendas' peones. However, the traditional hacendado elite social network was active at these more remote haciendas also. Mónica, who has written her own account detailing life on one of her family's immense haciendas in Riobamba and an indigenous invasion that resulted in the family's loss of a portion of the lands attached to the hacienda, described one of the ways that the social network functioned in the past:

When I was a child, the hacienda was very hard to access and required the crossing of a river. However, it was also located near the train that ran from Riobamba to Guayaquil. People who wanted to travel to Europe from Ecuador

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<sup>31</sup> Margarita regularly used words such "cholo," "longo," and "negrito/a" to refer to the family's domestic help. She always lowered her voice when doing so but definitely not enough to ensure that the individuals wouldn't hear these derogatory terms. In my experience, these types of actions function to remind individuals of their "proper place" outside of elite social circles.

would arrive in Riobamba by foot or horse, staying at the haciendas of friends and family along the way. They would then take the train to Guayaquil where they could catch a boat to Europe (especially France). The process of getting to Guayaquil from the highlands could take several weeks with many stops at haciendas along the way. (Mónica)

My consultants' descriptions of hacienda life were mostly idyllic with no hint of the strain or social discord that would lead to agrarian reforms and land invasions in the country by the middle of the twentieth century. Life was sweet and "las haciendas antiguamente eran buen negocio. Ahora ya no. Se vivía... es que también te digo, Jennifer, que teníamos, la gente de Quito era muy, muy pequeño. Entonces no gastaba. Por ejemplo, papá y mamá eran gente que tenía una muy buena casa con todo, pero era gente de poco gasto" (Jorge). The huasipungo system guaranteed that labor was quite inexpensive and hacendados had few expenses. This freed up their profits for the purchase of luxury items and trips outside of the country. All of that began to change as pressure mounted for land redistribution and social change.

My consultants' statements about their past and current connection to land alluded to another important social reality that has shaped my traditional hacendado elite consultants' experiences. Their more recent family histories are also marked by dramatic loss of land, either through economic decline or expropriations and indigenous invasions. These losses figured prominently in our casual conversations and formal interviews. My consultants were nostalgic about their days past (today and yesterday) on family haciendas and the "farms" that were taken, sold or lost along the way. Many of my traditional hacendado elite consultants who were in their fifties or older lamented the passing of the hacienda era (and with it a system that all but guaranteed their social, political, and economic superiority). This doesn't mean that younger people who were not yet born during the height of the hacienda era do not feel a sense of loss associated with social changes that have complicated their relationships with the wider society.

On the contrary, many spoke to me wistfully about what it must have been like to live during that period. These discussions were especially difficult for Daniel, a thirty-something consultant who is also a close friend of mine. Daniel's family owned several haciendas in the vicinity of Quito. As the city grew and various life events affected the family's means, their lands were sold or taken by the metropolitan government. This has always been a source of pain for Daniel who has spent his entire life securely within the fold of the traditional hacendado elite even though most of his family's landholdings are gone. About midway through my extended fieldwork in Ecuador, Daniel declared that he would no longer talk with me about my research, as it was too painful for him. When pressed, he explained that all of his "brothers" (the elite peer group with whom he has grown up) still have their family lands and he has always wondered what his life could have been like if his family had been able to retain their lands. Talking to me about my research had brought this all freshly to the surface, and the pain was too great for Daniel. With tears brimming in his eyes and a slightly defiant set to his shoulders, he described feeling as though part of his soul (*alma*) has been ripped away from him. Several other young consultants described similar feelings (albeit in less dramatic terms) when discussing the process and outcome of agrarian reforms and land invasions in the highlands.

The truth is that many of my consultants have lost land and property as a result of agrarian reforms and land invasions. Some lost multiple farms that included vast lands. Despite these losses, most of my consultants still retain one or more farms that continue to produce products for national or international markets. Nevertheless, my traditional hacendado elite

consultants (young or old) did not express any positive feelings about agrarian reforms.<sup>32</sup> They were adamant that the results of land reform have been overwhelmingly negative for the country's progress and for the people who received land taken from hacendados. José blamed the negative results on "ignorance":

Land reform was the worst thing for Ecuador. Look at the farm next to ours. It was greatly affected by land reform. During the reform, the family was thrown out of the hacienda. In the case of that farm, it was not worked very effectively before the reform. After the family was thrown out, the land was distributed among poor people who were not *indígenas*. They are poor because they haven't done anything and they never work. While these people did pay something for the land, it was really nothing, just a symbolic gesture. Since the land was handed over to the poor people it hasn't produced anything. The people don't work the land, they have cut down all of the trees to sell the wood for money, and they don't have enough land to have a ganaderia that produces enough to live off of. The mestizos who live in the area are ignorant people without values. They get pregnant very early and they will never get ahead. (José)

José is young, and some would characterize him as a bit brash. My other consultants were more measured in their comments about land reform. José mentions that the family that had owned the farm next door didn't work it effectively even before land reforms were passed. My consultants acknowledged that the expropriation of lands that were not sufficiently productive was a key component of the 1973 agrarian reforms. They also described how many of their family haciendas were taken *despite* being extremely productive. In several cases, indigenous levantamientos and land invasions resulted in the expropriation of highly productive farms.

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<sup>32</sup> Statements made by a few of Galo Plaza Lasso's descendants are an important exception. It is worth noting that Galo Plaza Lasso is widely considered to be one of Ecuador's most progressive and developmentalist presidents (1948-52) to date. He was also a hacendado whose extended family controlled vast lands throughout the country. Several of Galo Plaza Lasso's family members reminded me on multiple occasions that he was a proponent of land reform long before the government, having "returned" lands to the indigenous workers on one of his farms well before the government enacted policies requiring reform. The use of the term "returned" was intentional and debated within the confines of the family. Some family members assert that it is more accurate to say that Galo Plaza Lasso "gave the land to indigenous workers." These sorts of conversations were always awkward and slightly tense.

When this occurred, the government often cited demographic pressure as the official rationale for the seizure. One of my consultants recalled how this process unfolded for him and his family:

It was a mixture of problems – there was turmoil in Ecuador in all farms. There was agitation and it had to happen. The communities next to [our farm] filed a suit against IERAC saying that they wanted to expropriate for their benefit because blah, blah, blah, blah blah... The law at that time permitted that and, in fact, it incited people to file a suit and get land reformed and get the land given to them. So I decided to help my father and I dedicated myself – I think it was four or five years – to that thing. Managing the farm, the legal aspect, preparing the defense, and it ended up with the final expropriation of the land. We always had the expectation that we would be able to save the land, obviously. So we got the lawyers and fought...but it didn't turn out that way. ... The whole thing just collapsed for my father.

MPD – a political faction at that time - was involved with all of this. They were promoting land invasions. Once they invaded your land, then they filed suit against you and they said that they have always been there – there was a whole script on how to get the land. Then they say that the land was not properly cultivated and obviously in two to three years of invasion and more invasions, things were not working so well. But they didn't win because of the land not being cultivated properly, they won because of presión demográfica.

At the time of the invasion, we only had about 15 people working on the farm. Three mayordomos, milk maids, and some others... The wheat was all mechanized by that time but we still used milk maids. We had already in the 1960s transferred ownership of the huasipungos associated with the farm. They were only successful in taking the land by using the demographic pressure reasoning because it is very subjective. At that time, I was totally in charge of the farm. The farm was working! But basically at the minimum operating level, just to make sure it was running. Because what they wanted us to do was shut down the operation and then they would say it is abandoned. They were doing everything possible to finish us. (Gabriel)

Land reforms and indigenous levantamientos have sought to disrupt the system of social inequality that has prevailed in Ecuador since the colonial period and ultimately result in redistribution of resources in the country. Human relationships are at the heart of these struggles, and many of my consultants mourn a system where the patrón was the unquestioned authority in daily life. Santiago – an hacendado by birth, architect by training and ethnologist by choice – expressed sentiments that I heard repeated by others multiple times. He patiently explained to me that the elimination of the huasipungo (i.e. indentured servitude) was bad for all

parties involved and bad, in general, for the country. It was bad for the huasipungeros because it destroyed their way of life and they were not left with any recourse. It was also bad for the landowners because it amounted to a near confiscation of their land and the land no longer was producing anything for the landowner, the market, or the economy. My consultants' comments about land reform and the elimination of the huasipungo system suggest that many have unrealistic views about the relationship that existed between patrón and peón. Feelings of loss, abandonment and betrayal extended to discussions about how relations between hacendados and their workers have changed since land reforms and the mass migration of former hacienda workers to urban centers.

In fact, another characteristic that my traditional hacendado elite consultants share is that they all report extremely positive relations with their former huasipungeros. This is in contrast to the commonly accepted opinion and first-hand reports that hacendados were often unscrupulous and sadistic dictators who ruled over their lands with an iron fist. In contrast to this sentiment, my consultants consistently reported close relationships with their hacienda workers based on mutual respect and care:

“No, nunca hemos tenido ese problema porque ha habido una excelente relación con los indígenas; siempre de mucho respeto y de mutuo respeto. No hemos sido gente que abusa de la gente; como te digo, la gente de arriba ahí... la calle de arriba, el pueblo se llama ... , como mi padre.”

"Como familia. Nos llevábamos bien, nunca hubieron líos de leyes, de nada, nunca. Era una hacienda que tenía costumbres muy bonitas, había ganado, había buenas siembras de maíz. ... Y te digo, era una hacienda que tenía una vida tranquila. Nunca hubo problemas laborales de huelgas, no, no, no, jamás, nunca."

“Nunca tuvimos un problema laboral, jamás, nunca. Nunca un problema entre patrón y peones, nunca.”



"Eran peones de la hacienda, peones y nosotros patrón, pero nos llevábamos como si fuera familia."

Many of my consultants – especially my older consultants – acknowledged that the hacienda system was paternalistic and also that this paternalistic relationship with former hacienda workers endures into the present day. They continue to feel responsibility for their family's workers, the people of the haciendas and their relatives.<sup>33</sup> They regard the paternalism cultivated during the hacienda era as a positive force and some even credit it with the preservation of indigenous customs and culture in areas with large haciendas:

Como puede ser mal?! Indigenous customs were made in the hacienda and el patrón protected the indígenas. The hacienda was the center of the fiestas. The idea that the hacienda was bad is a myth. Actually, indígenas became orphans after agrarian reform. They no longer had a father (el patrón) and they no longer had resources (resources on hacienda lands). After agrarian reform, indigenous insecurity increased and indígenas were robbed because they were without protection provided by el patrón. (Marco)

Despite the sentiment that workers were/are "like family," very clear boundaries exist between "patrón" and "peón." Whether my consultants want to admit it or not, this separation has been always been part of the "simbolismo of the hacienda." This was evident in the passage from *La Hacienda* cited above with the authors' reference to the existence of "dos culturas" associated with the hacienda. The boundaries between these different cultures were (and still are) reinforced through daily practice and the enforcement of traditional hacendado elite authority, especially when/if "peones" were suspected of stepping out of line with accepted social hierarchy. To grasp the dissonance between traditional hacendado elite assertions that

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<sup>33</sup> This was not the case with most of my younger consultants who are just beginning to manage their family's landholdings. These business-oriented up-and-coming hacendados more often express a desire to shed these ongoing paternalistic relationships and the obligations they entail in favor of labor relationships that more closely adhere to the "modern" ideals of global capitalism. Chapter Five addresses this divergence in greater detail.

their relationships with hacienda workers were “like family” and how “peones” actually experienced those relationships, one need only consider the following visual illustration of hacienda life offered by Julio Toaquiza in his book *Juliupak muskuykuna* [Los Sueños de Julio] (2007:13):



Figure 3: Hacendado and State response to nascent indigenous organizing

There is a lot depicted in Señor Toaquiza’s painting that points to a highly authoritarian hacienda system not divorced from violence and other forms of coercion. Sometimes this was accomplished through the historical alignment of the military with traditional hacendado elites in the highlands. The point I want to make here is that it is quite likely that former and current

hacienda workers would not agree that their relationship with *los patrones* mirrors that of a family. Symbolic and material boundaries were clearly drawn and visible on the hacienda. Patrónes and peones inhabit(ed) very different realms on the hacienda and in society, and the boundaries that separate them are based on cultural differences that link elites to whiteness, modernity and civilization. According to my traditional hacendado elite consultants' comments, indigenous systems of hierarchy continue to mirror colonial ideas about difference and reinforce existing social boundaries between elite "blancos" and indígenas. Many of my consultants offered detailed analyses of indigenous social hierarchy, apparently based on their experiences with hacienda workers.<sup>34</sup> What was striking about these discussions is that they all shared a very consistent theme that the indigenous people whose behaviors and characteristics emulate "blancos" have higher status and rank than those who do not. The following entries from my field notes are representative of the more neutral insights my consultants' shared with me:

Mónica says that there are different types of indigenous people and they inhabit different positions within the indigenous stratification system. For example, her family owns a huge hacienda in Riobamba that has many "indios" within it. However, the "indios" there will not ever ride horses. They are very afraid of the horses, as they have been associated with "blancos" and colonial practices since colonial times in Ecuador. Even today, the indigenous people there shy away from horses. Horseback riding in Chimborazo has always been associated with the white landowner. However, there is another type of "indio" in the páramo (where the family has also owned lands for many generations). The work in the páramo is very different from the farming in the fertile soil of Riobamba. In the páramo, ganado is the primary farm product and ganadería the primary business, whether for meat, leche or both. This business requires a lot of land on which cattle can roam. Since colonial times, indigenous people in the páramo have been working with the cattle on horseback to the point that the cultural formation of the "chagra," or Andean cowboy, has emerged. Mónica reports that "indios" in the páramo are expert horsemen and, as such, they are positioned higher in the system

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<sup>34</sup> It is very possible that many of my consultants shared this information with me because of my role as an "antropóloga," which they often assumed meant that I was in Ecuador to work with indigenous people (despite always disclosing the focus of my dissertation research upon introduction). It often took a fair amount of convincing on my part that my interest was in hacendado experiences before my consultants would leave discussions about indigenous "society" and "culture" behind.

of indigenous stratification in Ecuador. Their willingness and expertise related to riding horses has placed them higher in the indigenous stratification because this skill places them closer to “blancos.” (September 18, 2006)

We talked about “el chagra,” which Marco described as “the gaucho of the Sierra.” Marco said that chagras are mestizos who practice indigenous and Spanish customs and are especially attentive to Spanish customs that have been forgotten by many people. Chagras have a lot of religious faith and combine elements of indigenous beliefs with active practice of Catholicism. Marcos compared the chagra of the highlands with “the chazo” in Cuenca and Loja, who Marco described as “mas blancos.” Marco also thought it is notable that chagras are expert horsemen in a part of Ecuador where most indigenous people have not historically ridden horses, as those were reserved for patrones and other Spaniards.<sup>35</sup> (November 13, 2006)

It is clear that Marco, Mónica and others recognize a system of social hierarchy in highland Ecuador wherein individuals are placed according to their perceived distance from (or closeness to) elite “whiteness.” However, while indigenous Ecuadorians may be judged according to their proximity to whiteness, these calculations take place in a system wholly divorced from the pyramid of elite power that opened this chapter. Performances of the patrón/peón relationship on contemporary haciendas highlight these continuing social divisions. I experienced this divide many times during my work in highland Ecuador, but one of the clearest examples took place during a rodeo at one of my consultants’ family haciendas in Cotopaxi Province. According to my consultants, “chagras” from all over the province come to the hacienda to work during rodeos. Along with people from the hacienda, they ride out into the highlands, round up the cattle and herd them back to hacienda corrals to be catalogued, weighed,

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<sup>35</sup> The meaning of “chagra” in highland Ecuador is highly contextual and depends on the speaker(s) and intended audience. Consultants like Marco often used the term to reference a particular indigenous/mestizo identity that they interpret as “mas alta” than other populations because their cultural characteristics are “more white.” However, “chagra” may also denote less flattering characteristics. For example, during discussions with two U.S. educated Ph.D.s at a famous elite university in Quito about what it means to possess “educación” and “la cultura” in Ecuador, I learned that “chagra” also means “tacky” and is used to reference non-elites and new elites (nuevo rico).

immunized and branded. Each rodeo typically takes place over six to eight days and follows a highly ritualized prescribed process. During this particular rodeo, my hosts explained that many haciendas no longer hold rodeos because not only has the price of meat decreased, but also rodeos are quite expensive. At the same time, my hosts emphasized that rodeos are "...very important for the maintenance of customs and traditions on the hacienda."

The rodeo is a tradition and the activity has practical and symbolic importance for the hacienda. It also entails obligations and responsibilities for *patrones* and *chagras*. During the rodeo, the women of the hacienda cook for the "rodeoantes." According to my hosts, the relationship between "patrón" and *empleados* is "upside down" during the rodeo. The "*patróncita*" serves the *rodeantes* (*chagras*) and the *dueños* (*hacendados*) eat last. My hosts also emphasized that not everyone who owns an hacienda today is a *patrón*, and this differs from the way things used to be in highland Ecuador. My host, Modesto, also explained that "being a *patrón* and maintaining that relationship with the *empleados* is interesting and delicate."

According to Modesto, "the rodeo is a fiesta but it is also a job. It is a fiesta because there is a lot of drinking and dancing and singing amongst the *empleados*. It is also a job and important work because if the *chagras* don't work, nothing will come of it. Balancing the fiesta and work aspects of the rodeo can be tricky and sometimes delicate because the *rodeantes* are not young people. They are adults and you cannot tell them to stop drinking and go to bed. But at the same time, they do have to work."

I witnessed this challenge and the stark division between traditional *hacendado* elites and hacienda workers first-hand during the rodeo. After a hard day of work, we women fed the *rodeantes* with food that we had been preparing all day while the men were out rounding up the cattle. The *dueños* and their guests (other traditional *hacendado* elite family and friends, as well

as a gringa anthropologist) ate last and then retired to the main house while the chagras and *empleadas* (female hacienda workers) sang, danced and drank lots of trago (alcohol) in the hacienda out-buildings. I (the gringa anthropologist) chose to stay with the chagras and participate in the fiesta, much to the chagrin of my hacendado hosts (who had previously warned me about spending too much time with the empleados). While I was hanging out with the rodeantes, some of the “blanco” young men came from the main house to join the fun and drink some alcohol. Their participation led to a great deal of tension in the fiesta and almost resulted in a fight between the drunk blanco young men who were trying to physically assert their dominance and the chagras, who were also quite drunk by this time. Following a tense skirmish that had great potential to escalate but did not, the blanco young men grabbed a bottle of trago and retreated to the main hacienda house.

Later, when I joined my hacendado hosts and their friends in the main house, I was met with icy disdain and some pointed comments about my decision to spend the evening with the chagras. They made it painfully clear to me that I had breached accepted social boundaries and insulted my hosts and their guests by choosing to spend my time with the rodeantes and empleadas instead of with them in the main house. My host delivered my verbal reprimand in full earshot of the indigenous empleadas with whom I had been celebrating before returning to the main house. In this way, they too received the message about unacceptable behavior that breached hacienda rules of comportment.

Traditional hacendado elites accept that there are clear distinctions between themselves and the people who have historically worked their lands. These intrinsic differences extend into the contemporary period and transcend economic conditions. Today, traditional hacendado elite families are not the only large landowners in el pueblo. As economic circumstances in the

country have changed, so have the demographics of land ownership. Simply owning an hacienda is no longer enough to guarantee admission into the elite ranks of Ecuadorian society. My consultants cautioned me about using the term “*hacendado*” too loosely in my research and proposed that I was conflating “*hacendado*” and “*propietario*.” Once again, Valeria patiently explained my error one afternoon while we discussed my plans for interviewing hacienda owners about their membership in a conservation foundation.

First, Valeria warned me about the assumption that all hacienda owners are members of the “elite.” She offered the example of a “*chagra*” landowner in Cotopaxi Province, Manuel, who has a very indigenous sounding last name. Valeria explained that this gentleman is a “*propietario*.” While this man owns a great deal of land and several homes in “*la zona*,” he would never be considered an *hacendado* or a member of the highlands elite. Valeria emphasized that someone like Manuel may be well-respected and have a lot of social capital in the *chagra* community, but this esteem doesn’t provide access to traditional *hacendado* elite networks of prestige. When pressed about the difference between *hacendados* and *propietarios*, Valeria and others stated that there are specific differences related to *educación* – both in terms of schooling and cradle education, to borrow a term from Marisol de la Cadena (2000:48).

Valeria also suggested that there are cultural differences that separate *hacendados* and *chagra propietarios* in the countryside. She described that there are several “points of verticality” between the *chagra propietarios* and the people in the communities in the zone. According to Valeria, these points of verticality extend beyond the economic and into the realm of social relations. She emphasized that these issues of verticality have an important bearing on the status of *chagras* in daily life. *Propietarios* like Manuel work their own land, utilizing help from their relatives and fictive kin (my words). The system of verticality ensures that they can draw on

labor resources from the communities. By contrast, hacendados in la zona must now contract for labor and helpers to work their lands and carry out rodeos, etc. Valeria reminded me that the hacendados cannot draw on relationships of verticality within the communities. However, she also offered that the hacendados have their social network system that they draw on to support each other by working collaboratively on economic activities. This type of collaboration has a long history because the hacendados are well-connected to each other through multiple generations of kinship alliances and shared social experiences in Quito and the countryside.

From the perspective of my traditional hacendado elite consultants, the characteristic that perhaps most clearly sets them apart from “propietarios” is the possession of an essential connection to the land in the countryside. Over and over again, my consultants emphatically stated that land is “parte de la esencia” of hacienda families. The traditional hacendado elite connection to land in Ecuador is understood as an intrinsic quality, rather than a trait that has been cultivated and derived from the historical monopolization of resources since the colonial period. They cite this inherent, incorporated cultural capital (Bourdieu 2001) as a reason that they continue to maintain and acquire hacienda lands, even if the economic benefits are minimal:

Hacendados have their roots in the land. They have maintained the haciendas due to their amor of the land. My husband is from a familia maravilla – it is an hacendado family that has gained fortunes from oil. Oil families have kept their lands despite everything because their roots are in the land.

Many of my younger consultants who are beginning to manage new hacienda businesses on their families’ lands reported that this essential quality resulted in “a calling” to leave their previous career tracks and dedicate themselves to their families’ lands. This “calling” and the capitalistic business practices that have developed from it will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. My purpose in noting “the calling” at this juncture is to emphasize the continuing



allure of land and property among the multiple generations of traditional hacendado elites with whom I worked and interacted.

My consultants' economic and political circumstances have most certainly changed since Ecuador's multiple rounds of land reform and the abolition of indentured servitude. Some of my consultants have seen their fortunes and prospects dwindle, while others were able to diversify their assets by capitalizing on changing social conditions in the country. However, I want to emphasize that they all share in common this expressed profound attachment to land ownership. Those who lost their haciendas were actively seeking opportunities to regain lands, and those who grew tremendous fortunes through actions divorced from their properties steadfastly retain control over as much family property as possible. Like their parents and grandparents before them, my younger consultants split their time growing up between their urban homes and rural family properties. Many of them are striving to create the same type of opportunities for their young families to experience the hacienda, whether on their own family lands or those belonging to members of their close-knit extended social network. Whenever possible, they are also acquiring new lands, whether to be dedicated to intensive forms of agricultural production (Patricio, Gabriel), to serve as a weekend escape and raise specialized horses for bullfighting (Emanuel and Alicia) or an actual uninhabited island that does not yet have any purpose beyond a getaway location for a group of lifelong friends (Modesto, Valeria, José).

#### Urban Lifestyles: Private Lives Apart

Almost all of my consultants split their time between their "farms" in el pueblo and their homes and businesses located in the Quito metropolitan area. It is fairly simple for traditional hacendado elites to maintain their distance from the masses when spending time at their family landholdings in the countryside. At first glance, it might seem as though maintaining this

distance would be a bit more complicated in a city of close to two million people. However, my consultants have myriad ways to do just that. The type and placement of their homes, their ability to access high-end services, resources, and institutions beyond the reach of most Ecuadorians and even their mode of travel usually keep them at a safe distance from the Ecuadorians who are outside of their insular elite social circles.

Stretching back to the colonial period, private homes have been the inner sanctum of elite lifestyles in highland Ecuador. The elite kinship-based social network discussed above tends to translate into many home-based social activities, including parties, events associated with rites of passage and holiday celebrations. Because of the intimate nature of the location in familial space, it is fairly easy for elites to police the boundaries and send clear messages about inclusion and exclusion through the distribution of invitations. Having been on both sides of this equation (sometimes included and sometimes passed over), I am aware of the symbolic weight of the message delivered with each invitation or omission.

My consultants' urban residences varied in size. Some homes are downright palatial by most peoples' standards. All are large by Ecuadorian standards and well-apportioned. The best description I can offer for interior decoration is to say that my traditional hacendado elite consultants take great pride in their classic, European-inspired tastes. Their gracious homes are suitable for housing an extended family as well as multiple empleadas. In some cases, my consultants have actually acquired or constructed a large building that contains apartments for many family members. It is also increasingly common for multiple generations to build family homes next to one another in newly developed *urbanizaciones* (gated communities). Regardless of the configuration, urban residences are almost always large enough to host parties and other social activities. Families employ multiple empleadas who are often live-in employees. My

consultants consider it quite commonplace to employ several domestic workers. As Margo explained one afternoon while we were discussing her upcoming baby shower and possible gifts, “We only need a few cloth diapers. Everyone here has empleados so I don’t need many [cloth diapers]. The empleados will wash them every day.” I remember silently wondering how many empleados Margo had at her home washing diapers, cleaning, cooking meals and taking care of her children. But Margo didn’t really mean that *everyone* in Ecuador has empleados who work in their homes. Rather, she was assuring me that all elites have in-home help. According to Teresa, this is just plain common sense. Teresa’s home is so large I never did see all of it despite multiple visits and tours of different portions of the compound. During one of these tours, Teresa exclaimed after passing another empleada in the hall, “Imagine how difficult it would be to take care of without help!” And while the huasipungero system has been abolished in Ecuador, it was not unusual for me to encounter the empleados from my consultants’ haciendas working in their urban homes, as well.

Empleados typically take care of most of the errands that would otherwise bring my consultants into contact with people mostly outside of their social network. This includes shopping in Ecuador’s iconic open-air markets. For Alejandra and others, this is important because they feel that they don’t get “good deals” otherwise because they are “blanca,” in contrast to the mestiza (or for some, “cholo”) market women. My consultants also prefer to shop in the city’s modern supermercados like Supermaxi (owned by a prominent elite family) and the now numerous high-end shopping malls spread throughout the city. These spaces are preferred for their cleanliness and orderliness. Many other daily activities take place away from the observing eyes of the masses. I learned this from my female consultants after soliciting recommendations for hair services. One of my female consultants began making inquiries on my

behalf, and I soon found myself traveling far north in the city to middle-class home of Gloria, a stylist who receives clients in her home. Each month, I would spend three hours with Gloria, having my hair styled, flipping through the society pages in glossy Ecuadorian magazines and chatting about the women and men in those pages who we both knew. My female consultants also introduced me to the trusted service providers who would come to their homes on a regular basis to provide facials, manicures and pedicures. Many of our long lunches culminated in foot soaks and pedicures.

All of that primping and prepping comes in handy during activities and events held at exclusive elite clubs like Quito Tennis y Golf Club. The history of the Quito Tennis y Golf Club began before 1930 and is punctuated with the names of Quito's buenas familias, many of whom also include my consultants. The Club has grown over the years to include premier facilities for tennis, golf, horseback riding/polo, swimming, soccer, squash and a state-of-the-art workout area. It also boasts nine restaurants, a salon and spa, internet café, game room, childcare center, a store offering computer and smartphone equipment and event facilities. All of my consultants are members of this club, whether they frequent the facilities or not. Gabriel likened membership at the Club with Catholicism, saying that "it may not be a big part of your day-to-day life, but you still have to be a member." Similarly, Santiago talked to me about what his own lifestyle is like as a member of las buenas familias. Santiago reluctantly shared that he has many friends in "high places" who he has known since he was a young child but these days they aren't able to see other that often due to their schedules and commitments. He described he has always been "...a member of Clubs like El Condado [Quito Tennis y Golf] and Ejecutivo," but he rarely goes to the Clubs anymore because he finds them silly. Based on the context of the conversation from which the preceding passage was excerpted, it is likely that part of the reason

that Santiago finds the Club “silly” today is the changed composition of its membership. As the country’s economy has changed in recent decade and new populations have acquired wealth, the composition of the Club’s membership has diversified beyond the realm of traditional hacendado elites and wealthy extranjeros. For some traditional hacendado elites, the Quito Tennis y Golf Club is no longer a place where everybody knows your name:

Things are changing. Before, a person had to be “white” to be part of the upper class but now there is some movement. When I was studying in the States [University of California, Berkeley and University of Illinois], flying back to Ecuador on breaks was like a party because everyone on the plane knew each other. You also knew everyone at the airport because so few people could afford to fly in those days. In the same way, everyone in the Quito Tennis y Golf Club knew each other in those days. But now in the airport and on the planes, you hardly know anyone and in the Club you may only run into a few people who you know on any given day. (Manuel)

Quito Tennis y Golf Club (and other comparable clubs in Ecuador) are technically public spaces where important elite social events and daily practices take place. I say “technically” because clubs like Quito Tennis y Golf are not accessible to the majority of Ecuadorians. To ensure that the Club remains somewhat exclusive, it is also quite expensive by Ecuadorian standards. I was able to visit the Club often while in Quito because many of my consultants took me there as a guest. Early on in my extended fieldwork, one of my consultants mentioned that the club offers special memberships for temporary residents, such as diplomats, business people, and students studying in Quito and offered to “sponsor” me for a temporary membership (letters of support from two “lifetime” or “active” Club members must accompany temporary membership applications). This sounded like a great idea to me so we headed off to the membership office. There I learned that while my gringa-graduate-student-with-prestigious-fellowship identity often helped open doors for me in Quito, the buck stopped at the Quito Tennis y Golf membership office. Assuming that my recommendations were strong enough for

admission, a 12-month temporary membership would have cost me about \$10,000 in 2006. The monthly fee alone would be over \$600.00. This sum is well above the average monthly salary that a skilled Ecuadorian worker could hope to earn in 2006 and is a fortune when compared to the \$2.00 a day on which it is estimated most unskilled Ecuadorians survive. Membership fees were even higher for “active” members, with an initial payment in the tens of thousands followed by monthly fees of several hundred dollars. This whole experience gave me pause. I knew that all of my consultants in Quito were members of Quito Tennis y Golf, and I also understood that some of these families have dwindling economic resources. How were they able to maintain their memberships while “cash poor?” As it turns out, memberships in the club are extended to children once they reach a certain age, and families that have maintained memberships for many years (i.e., the founding members from *las buenas familias*) are lifetime members whose fees are locked-in at a very low rate for as long as memberships do not lapse. They are able to maintain the status accrued from club membership even as their resources become more scarce. New members (i.e., the “new elite” and newly wealthy (*nuevo rico*)) pay a very steep initial fee and higher monthly fees to accrue the status associated with membership.

### Mobility and Distinction: A Power Geometry of Daily Practice

The increased mobility so characteristic of globalization (and global capitalism) is not available equally to all (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Harvey 2005; Massey 1991; Massey 1993). Increased physical and symbolic mobility is a benefit that traditional hacendado elites accrued through generations of access to coveted resources such as land and property. Their histories are marked by movement – from the Old World to the New World, between city and countryside and from urbanity to provincialism (depending on the perspective of the viewer). The freedom of mobility is another characteristic that elites in Quito share, and it is one that also allows them

to minimize their interaction with people outside of their social network. Elite residential patterns highlight this aspect of inclusion and exclusions. Alejandra explained:

Quito has become so large and the names are so many that people now gauge your position by asking where you live, as well as your name and the names of your parents. This is a greater attention to socioeconomic status as well as social placement because there are some areas in Quito where only nuevos ricos live [Ale gestures toward the urbanización El Condado] and other areas where las buenas familias continue to live.

Some of my consultants would likely feel mortified by Alejandra's comment because they own homes in the ultra-expensive El Condado urbanización. However, while they might find fault with Ale's categorization of El Condado, they would probably also strongly agree with her assertion about preferred residential locations. As society has changed, so have residential preferences.

My traditional hacendado elite consultants are fond of talking about the days past when the city of Quito was much smaller and most indigenous people were still residing in the highlands countryside. While these discussions could (and sometimes did) reach back in time to the colonial period, mostly our discussions were about much more recent history during my consultants' own lifetimes. Many of my consultants' families owned grand homes that were located in Quito's historic colonial center. As the population in the city has grown, elites have moved northward away from the colonial center. Not surprisingly, northern Quito is considered the "modern" part of the city and houses upscale shopping centers and Quito's financial district. My consultants often warned me about spending time in "dangerous" (mostly working class) southern Quito and offered many disparaging comments about the people living there, especially those who have acquired wealth by "pirating DVDs and other illegal activities without honor" (Margarita). The move northward, and more recently into the adjacent valleys, is a form of elite

“white flight” as my consultants and other elites seek refuge from the burgeoning masses and what they consider to be potential threats to their safety. Some of my consultants have very successfully taken advantage of the opportunities arising from this elite exodus by purchasing and developing lands in the newly prestigious areas.

For most Ecuadorians, neoliberal economic and political adjustments resulted in fewer employment opportunities and growing income inequality (Berry 1997:14; Larrea and North 1997:924–930; North 1999:7; North 2004; Portes and Hoffman 2003:66). Portes and Hoffman (2003:66) describe that these conditions also resulted in increasing perceptions of crime and civil insecurity throughout most Latin American cities. Portes and Hoffman’s discussion of “dominant class” reactions to rising crime and insecurity aligns very well with my ethnographic research observations in Quito. In recent decades, there has been incredible growth of exclusive *urbanizaciones* (gated communities) with around-the-clock protection provided by heavily armed private security. Within these fortress-like communities, wealthy Quiteños are able to isolate themselves from the rest of the city’s population. Valeria’s perspective about the appeal of *urbanizaciones* reflects a common sentiment among elites. She explained to me that she and her husband recently bought land in Tumbaco (located in the valley just east of the Quito urban area) within a “closed community” and are building a home there. She explained that building in a closed community was important for her and her husband because he spends so much time at the family haciendas. Valeria and her husband believe it is safer for Valeria and their children to be in a closed environment. They also are quite pleased that the gated community includes a bike path that runs the entire length of the valley so they can walk or ride without security issues, pollution or noise.



The move into suburban-type communities of Cumbayá and Tumbaco in the Valley of Tumbaco represents a significant departure for traditional hacendado elites. During our discussions about the tremendous growth in places like Cumbayá and Tumbaco, Teresa and others stated that most people from Quito and the highlands used to believe that the weather in Cumbayá would make one ill. Now this is a premiere place to live, and the milder weather is considered quite a draw. My consultant, Gabriel, had a lot to do with changing perceptions of Cumbayá. Gabriel hails from one of the “best” Quiteño families. He developed and manages multiple thriving Cumbayá businesses that are drivers in the field of culture and elite distinction. Gabriel recognized Cumbayá’s potential early on and purchased a great deal of land there. He then developed much of this land into an ultra-exclusive gated community, within which he retained property for himself and each of his children. In addition to the armed guards at the entrance of the gated community, each home has private security. Within these types of communities, the boundaries between elites and the rest of the population are policed in both physical and symbolical space. Visiting my contacts in their gated communities was always a complicated affair for a couple of reasons. First, these communities are typically difficult for most outsiders to find. Whenever I traveled there by taxi, my fare was usually sky-high because we spent so much time driving around trying to find the address. Second, arriving by taxi or on foot was problematic. Guards were suspicious, and I was usually only able to gain access after convoluted three-way conversations between me, the guards and whoever we reached inside of my consultants’ homes. The whole experience always left me a bit rattled, annoyed and uncomfortable.

Transportation is another area where the differences between my consultants and the wider Ecuador population are quite marked. Quito has an extensive public transportation

network, which in 2006, 2007 and 2008 included intercity and regional buses, rapid transit and a huge fleet of taxis. Sidewalks are also abundant, making walking a viable transportation option. For me, Quito's public transportation system was a godsend, providing affordable access to all areas of the city and surrounding countryside at pretty much any time of day or night. For my consultants', it was nothing more than a nightmarish safety hazard that clogs the streets, brings criminals into their neighborhoods and pollutes the air. My consultants would never choose to stuff themselves into the inordinately crowded spaces of the city's trolley system or the public buses where *el pueblo* is just a bit too close for comfort (and might pick your pocket). My consultants frequently discouraged me from using not only the trolley and bus systems, but also taxicabs, as "everyone knows that many taxi drivers are also criminals." When I was, in fact, mugged at gunpoint in broad daylight while walking back to my apartment from a nearby bus stop, many of my consultants simply shook their heads and reminded me how dangerous both public transportation and walking are in Quito because the criminals "watch you." Instead, all of my consultants have private vehicles that are quite expensive even by U.S. standards. They drive everywhere, unless they are in the safety of their gated communities. Many also have personal chauffeurs. It is telling that upon concluding a visit at their homes, they always insisted on either driving me to my next destination or sending me with their chauffeurs. Not only were they concerned for my safety, but they really did not want taxis coming to their residences unless absolutely necessary.

### Educated Cosmopolitans

It is true that many traditional hacendado elite families experienced the loss of landed wealth through sales, invasions and state-sanctioned expropriations. However, it is also the case that most, if not all, still came out of the land-reform period with a true competitive advantage in

the country that helps them to maintain their social status and upwardly mobile career options. Elites in Ecuador have had access to a private educational system that is not only largely unavailable to non-elites (particularly those considered non-white), but also grants them entry to the small cadre of Ecuadorians who have the preparation and credentials to participate in the national state. Advanced education in Ecuador and abroad, coupled with membership in active elite social networks, have positioned them to become the country's professionals and access key information valued within the country's changing economic and political conditions.

Despite a considerable increase in literacy rates in Ecuador (91 percent in 2001), the ability and chance to pursue secondary education credentials is not evenly distributed among the population. Novo and de la Torre (2010:4) report enormous racial disparities in access to higher education, and discussions with my consultants support this statement. With the exception of just two older female consultants who did not attend university, all of my traditional hacendado elite consultants attended private universities. Many of them attended university in the United States or Europe, and the possession of international graduate degrees is quite common. Elites do not attend public primary or secondary schools in Ecuador. Instead, they favor a very narrowly defined consortium of "elite institutions" that cater to a specific clientele based on pedigree, class and racial identities. Elite children attend school with the children of their families' friends, the same children they see at parties, rites-of-passage events and in social clubs. Many will go on to marry and carry out business activities within this network. The private colegios they attend in Quito emphasize foreign language skills, especially English. One such colegio founded by two of my consultants begins teaching English to students in preschool. Diplomas from these expensive colegios virtually guarantee admission into universities abroad. As with social clubs like Quito Tennis y Golf, admittance into elite colegios in Ecuador often

requires that one's parents attended or that one can provide recommendations from alumni or other influential individuals (Novo and de la Torre 2010:6). Graduates are multilingual and well-traveled with the ability to move with ease through a number of linguistic and cultural milieus, often simultaneously. This educational process serves to reinforce existing social boundaries and longstanding social networks based on genealogy and pedigree while misrepresenting the resulting advantages as the outcome of natural abilities and higher intelligence.

The premium that my consultants placed on higher education contradicts recent findings by Roitman (2009:81) suggesting that the “traditional upper class” in Quito does not value the “practical” aspects of higher education, which are critical for success in modern capitalism (i.e., engineering, economics, etc.). On the contrary, I found that emerging hacendados are not only highly educated and well-versed in Western educational perspectives that valorize global capitalism, but they are also putting these principles to work on their family haciendas. In addition, they fully understand the powerful role that education plays in the cultural reproduction of the dominant classes by defining the meanings and values deemed “legitimate” within society. Several of my consultants have been able to parlay this knowledge into lucrative educational institutions that confer to graduates the material and symbolic advantages that go hand-in-hand with educational credentials in modern global capitalism (see Chapter Four). The rewards accrued from credentials conferred by elite institutions in Ecuador and abroad are significant, and despite the trickle-down claims associated with neoliberal adjustments and more recent leftist political reforms, they continue to be distributed very unevenly.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the long-standing markers of traditional hacendado elite distinction that took shape in the colonial period and have carried forward to the present day. The emphasis that my traditional hacendado elite consultants place on intragroup endogamy, family lineage and genealogical knowledge point to kinship as a salient organizing category for elite social distinction in Ecuador. The chapter also examined some of the qualities and characteristics that my consultants recognize as setting them apart from the wider population of Quito specifically and Ecuador more generally. The consumer practices and ideas about “taste” that underlie hacendado lifestyles help to mark off the social boundaries that separate traditional hacendado elites from other elite factions and especially the Ecuadorian masses.

What advantages, if any, does social endogamy provide in a society undergoing substantial change where more and more non-elite Ecuadorians have access to educational opportunities and new economic enterprises? As we will see in Chapter Four, advantages are accrued and social boundaries reaffirmed in the form of incorporated cultural capital and social capital. Intragroup endogamy helps ensure that traditional hacendado elites, as well as other “acceptable” factions of Ecuadorian elites, continue to exhibit important characteristics of “cradle education” (de la Cadena 2000; Roitman 2009) that are recognizable in one another and absent in outsiders.

## CHAPTER FOUR: EDUCATION, EDUCACIÓN AND CHOLOIFICACIÓN IN ECUADOR

*March 2006, Quito, Ecuador:*

*This morning I went to meet with some of my consultants who own an educational facility in northern Quito. Construction is booming in this area. Family homes are being sold to developers and replaced with ultra-modern apartment buildings. We were meeting in a classroom on the second floor when we heard a loud crash right outside of our window. The classroom was located right beside the construction site for a new apartment building of about 15 stories. At first, William and I thought the noise came from falling materials on the site. But when we looked out the window to see if any materials had hit the cars parked along the street and up on the sidewalks, we saw two men lying on the concrete, not moving. One construction helmet was lying some distance away in a pile of rubbish and it was not clear to us if one the men had been wearing it prior to the fall. Quickly we realized that the two men had been working, unsecured, on a makeshift scaffolding about five or six stories up. The flimsy rope holding the scaffolding had snapped, causing the men and the wooden structure to plummet to the concrete below.*

*One of the men had landed on a hole with metal grating and the other landed directly on the concrete. The man on the concrete was bleeding profusely from his facial area. Neither man appeared to be breathing or moving. William rushed outside to see if anyone had called 911. None of the men on the site had a cell phone, so William tried to call 911. The line was busy for the first 5 or 10 minutes after the accident. After several minutes (it seemed about 15 minutes, but I didn't have a watch), both men began to struggle to breathe, not moving but trying to breathe. The man who hit the concrete was having an extremely difficult time. His chest was heaving in great jerks, and with each jerk, blood pumped out of his mouth and nose. Time was passing, and there was still no sign of an ambulance. About 15 or 20 minutes following contact with 911, an ambulance arrived with two paramedics but no equipment. The paramedics assessed the situation and then strapped the man who had landed on the metal-covered hole onto a stretcher-board and loaded him into the ambulance. We assumed that they made this decision based on a comparison of the two men's injuries, but I cannot be sure. The ambulance sped off leaving the second man where he lay trying to breathe.*

*Eventually a van pulled up and dropped off another medic at the scene. He did not have any equipment save for his hands and a used plastic 2-liter soda bottle that had been filled with water and into which a small hose had been stuck. The medic used this to clean some of the blood off of the injured man. He also performed CPR, as the man was beginning to slip away. Fifteen minutes or so later, another van arrived on the scene and dropped off two more medics with*

*oxygen and what appeared to be a medical supply kit. The three medics again performed CPR on the man, eventually reviving him enough to apply an oxygen mask so that he could breathe easier. There was still no sign of an ambulance. By this time, more than an hour had passed since the accident occurred. Finally, an ambulance arrived to transport the second man to a hospital. It was the very same ambulance that had first arrived at the scene. But by this time, it was too late. The man had died. The medics attempted CPR again, but they were unable to revive the man. So the medics packed up their things, covered the man's face with a piece of cloth they found on the ground, and left the body where it lay on the concrete. In Ecuador, only the police can remove a corpse from the scene of an accident or crime. So the man lay outside the classroom window until late that evening, as the police did not arrive on the scene until much, much later. We learned later that the first man taken away was alive, but with extensive injuries. The man who died was 22 years old.*

## **Unsettling Social Mobility**

Ecuador is a country of contrasts (Linke 1960). It is characterized by extreme diversity and dynamism in terms of geography, ecology, culture and ethnicity. My research with traditional hacendado elites in Quito regularly highlighted how these contrasts play out in daily practice. In stark contrast to the metaphorical pyramid of Ecuadorian eliteness that opened the previous chapter with images of social ascent, this chapter begins with a reminder that the climb toward upward mobility can be perilous. Social ascent is not the reality of daily life for many within neoliberal capitalist societies where basic public services, such as health and safety services, have eroded nearly to the point of complete ineffectiveness. As the passage above suggests, the idea of social mobility has been illusory for most Ecuadorians. Their grim reality in practice is a downward plummet that may even end in death.

I excerpted the passage above from field notes I recorded very soon after arriving in Quito for my extended research. Something that doesn't come across in the notes, but which still burns so brightly in my memories that I have to walk away from the computer every time I read those notes, is my consultants' extreme nonchalance about the whole incident. Two men had

literally fallen from the sky and lay dying almost in front of us, but my consultants saw no reason to postpone our meeting or provide any assistance beyond attempting to reach emergency services by telephone. As I tried to understand their reaction in the weeks following this event, I considered that it (and many similar scenes that I would observe over the next 13 months, including my own mugging on a busy, upscale street during the light of day) could be the result of desensitization from repeatedly bearing witness to death, injury and disruption within a neoliberal environment where “development” proceeded unchecked without the benefit of literal or figurative infrastructure safety nets, such as safety standards or emergency services. However, as my research unfolded, I realized that there were other important elements that contributed to this distant reaction to the tragedy unfolding in front of us on that spring day. Most of my traditional hacendado elite consultants live in a world characterized by health insurance policies that guarantee private medical attention in Ecuador and the United States. There is a world where births take place in whirlpool tubs surrounded by candlelight and soothing music, and specialists in private hospitals in Ecuador and abroad attend to serious illnesses or emergencies. The world that those construction workers embodied is one they do not want to find themselves facing in a downward slide on Ecuador’s pyramid of social hierarchy. The social separation between traditional hacendado elites and “el pueblo” that is accepted as *doxa*<sup>36</sup> made it possible for many of my consultants to espouse progressive ideas about democracy and the need for social leveling while also strictly guarding the borders of their own social positions.

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<sup>36</sup> My use of this concept follows Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1984). According to Bourdieu, “*doxa*” denotes that which is taken for granted in any particular society. It is through the “*doxa*” that individuals experience the natural and social worlds as self-evident (Bourdieu 1977:164–169). *Doxa* also imposes limits on social mobility by defining the “sense of one’s place” through notions of acceptable and appropriate consumption patterns linked to particular social positions. By organizing consumptive patterns through the imposition of classifications, *doxa* assists in reaffirming taken for granted social limits (Bourdieu 1984:471).



Many of my consultants were proponents of neoliberal economic and political reforms that touted economic growth and democratization that would “trickle down” and improve the lives of all sectors of Ecuadorian society. However, their actions frequently demonstrated that their support of neoliberal social leveling through market-driven equal opportunity was more theoretical than practical. For many of my consultants, progressive ideas about upward mobility for the larger population are “good to think with” (Lévi-Strauss 1963:89) but they remain guarded about their application in practice. Traditional hacendado elites are keenly aware that social mobility works in both directions – sometimes people move up the pyramid of Ecuadorian social hierarchy and sometimes they move down. In *Millennial Ecuador*, Norman Whitten (2003c:30) wrote that “contrastructural powers may shape and transform a nation, but structural power, the very force held by the rich and influential people and institutions through which they govern, seems never to go away.” While disenchantment with the contemporary expression of modernity in Ecuador and its many contradictions has catalyzed powerful forms of contrastructural resistance to “common sense” ideas about the naturalness of social boundaries in the Ecuadorian nation, the individuals who make up structural power rarely passively accept their downward slide on the social ladder. This chapter examines the quotidian and institutionalized forms of hacendado elite resistance to the social changes in Ecuador that could threaten their privileged position as the possessors of legitimate culture.

Chapter Four also highlights the double meaning of “descent” among traditional hacendado elites in Ecuador. Whereas Chapter Three considered the hyper-importance of genealogical descent in establishing traditional hacendado elite status, this chapter focuses on the ways in which these elites experience, and attempt to ward off, any possible descent in terms of their quality of life and social position in neoliberal Ecuador. I examine the contemporary

ambiguity of traditional hacendado elite status and some of the ways that my consultants attempt to deal with that uncertainty. In this social context of change and instability, traditional hacendado elites strive to establish new types of social boundaries in response to changing social conditions that facilitate the rise of newly wealthy and internationally connected populations. These populations, with their growing economic capital and expanding international social networks, are posing threats to traditional hacienda elite status in the highlands. I consider how traditional hacendado elites subjectively experienced and reflected on the passage of the hacienda era and their contemporary socioeconomic position in Ecuador. This chapter also explores how traditional hacendado elites attempt to reproduce class interests in neoliberal environments by drawing on and reinforcing long-standing ideologies of social difference. My consultants presented to me repackaged colonial ideas barely disguised in the discourse of advanced capitalism with its promise of social mobility through education. I explore how some elites attempt to capitalize on the promise of social mobility through elite education while simultaneously imposing its symbolic limits by reinforcing ideals of “social whiteness” in Ecuador. Finally, I examine how elite concepts of educación and other forms of social distancing continue to highlight intrinsic social differences that cannot be overcome simply through the acquisition of educational credentials.

### **El Patrón After Agrarian Reforms**

While the two waves of agrarian reforms in Ecuador may not have resulted in widespread redistribution of resources and social leveling, they did set in motion a series of social changes that threatened to erode traditional hacendado elite economic wealth and social privilege. The elimination of indentured servitude and the real or perceived threat of land loss due to invasions or expropriations forever altered labor relations and the system of agricultural production in the

highlands. These actions also contributed to the rise of a national indigenous movement that has consistently challenged elite ideas about racialized difference and the logic of rigidly maintained social boundaries based on those differences. Socioeconomic and political transformations wrought by the implementation of neoliberal reforms have further eroded traditional hacendado elite bases of privilege and, for many of my consultants, the easy confidence that their own position at the top of the Ecuadorian pyramid of social hierarchy is secure. In many ways, these changes have reinforced traditional hacendado elite perceptions of both physical and social separation from the masses in Ecuador. Overt social critique of the hacienda era and its repressive social/labor relations link existing inequities to the past practices of traditional hacendado elite families. As a result, many of my consultants expressed uneasiness related to how historical discussions portray their families and the social prejudices that are directed toward them as a result of these critiques.

#### The (Mis)Representations of “Huasipungo” & the State of Modern Hacendados

*"Mire Jennifer, aquí hay la fama de que el terrateniente, como yo le dije, era abusivo, era ladrón, era un bandido, que era malo, que era avaro. Y no era así. Vea, aquí hay la grave cosa que hay inclusive, hay un libro que se llama 'Huasipungo'. Todo es mentira." (Jorge)*

Jorge Icaza Coronel's indigenista novel, *Huasipungo*, was published in 1934. The novel highlighted the injustices and exploitation heaped upon indigenous hacienda workers by powerful landowners (hacendados). It served as an important form of social protest against the inhumane and cruel treatment of indigenous peoples at the hands of "white" landowners in Ecuador. Icaza's portrayal of hacienda life is quite similar to Julio Toaquiza's visual representation depicted in Chapter Three (Figure 3). My traditional hacendado elite consultants are keenly aware of this portrayal of hacienda life and, by extension, the representation of their

own ancestors. It is an image that my consultants often lamented in conversation with me while they protested the veracity of these depictions of history. For many of my consultants, writers like Icaza and Toaquiza, as well as the authors of many Ecuadorian textbooks, have distorted the facts surrounding the hacienda era in Ecuador and attempt to erase their families' many good deeds and progressive innovations from the historical record.

The huasipungo labor system dominated during the hacienda era in highland Ecuador. This system relied on a form of debt peonage that tied hacienda workers (huasipungeros) to landowners in a feudalistic relationship – workers received access to a small plot of land on the hacienda that they could work for their own benefit in exchange for providing steady labor to the hacendado. Conversations with my consultants about the huasipungo were intriguing. They often cautioned me to consider the huasipungo system on its own terms within the logic of the economic system that dominated until agrarian reforms took hold:

Huasipungo was very important mostly because of transportation problems – they had to live close to where they worked. The huasipungo was like a maid's quarter – when the maid decides to leave the job, she doesn't take the room with her! The huasipungo was the worker's quarters while they were working for you. The huasipungo assured the landowner a type of stability for a labor force. You can't judge the huasipungo according to today's conditions. You have to judge it in term of the conditions 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, period. (Manuel)

It was important to my contacts – especially up and coming hacendados – that I grounded my research about them in the present. For example, Gabriel urged me to make a study of “this moment,” one that takes a serious look at “how things are today.” Gabriel's family has owned and managed large haciendas throughout Ecuador for many generations. In addition to cattle, dairy and agricultural hacienda ventures, Gabriel's family is also involved in the Ecuadorian flower industry. In recent years, Gabriel and his wife (who also hails from a well-respected family of traditional hacendado elite) have spearheaded a move into the tourism business by

opening up family hacienda lands and homes to international and national visitors. Gabriel is a progressive and opened-minded man who regularly demonstrates thoughtfulness and empathy in relation to the plight of others. He also provides a good example of the complex social reality within which traditional hacendado elites find themselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century following decades of agrarian reforms and other political and economic upheavals that have cast a shadow on their family histories. In this time of uncertainty, Gabriel and many others implored me to make a serious study of the hacienda that focused on “the reality of today instead of dwelling on the abuses of the past.” As Gabriel explicitly reminded me, an honest study would make it clear that “not all hacendados were abusive.”

Indeed, while several of my consultants alluded to mistreatment of hacienda workers at the hands of other hacendados, they all asserted that their own families had exemplary relations with the huasipungeros who worked their family lands. When discussing the hacienda era in Ecuador and the huasipungo system of labor relations, my contacts emphasized the “honor” of their families. This characteristic was offered as a quality that set their ancestors apart from the minority of abusive and unscrupulous hacendados in the past. The “honor” of past hacendados dictated that they care for and protect the workers attached to their haciendas. Gabriel’s father, Santiago, described that the relationship between his family and their workers was and continues to be based on conceptions of honorable behavior. For consultants like Santiago, the elimination of the huasipungo in 1970 was bad for all parties involved and bad, in general, for the country. The end of the huasipungo system ushered in a new system of structured labor relations (i.e., capitalism) that is not guided by traditional values related to honor. Consultants like Jorge, whose statements opened this section, explicitly linked the decay of family-like relations between employers and workers in contemporary Ecuador to anti-hacienda sentiments like those

depicted in Icaza's *Huasipungo*. But hacendado "honor" wasn't the only thing that suffered a blow as a result of agrarian reforms in Ecuador. The end of the huasipungo system was also a blow for traditional hacendado elites because it made their monopoly over landed resources in the country far more tenuous and introduced the very real threat that their social position as the bearers of legitimate culture in Ecuador could be usurped. For several of my consultants, these threats were crystallized through indigenous land invasions and strikes, as well government expropriations of hacienda lands.

#### "Un Pais de Invasiones de las Haciendas"

My traditional hacendado elite consultants often talked about the concept of honor and its importance as a characteristic that shapes acceptable behavior among members of their social circle. Honor, and the behaviors to which it gives rise, sets my consultants apart from other Ecuadorians. But like so many aspects of traditional hacendado elite life, I learned from my consultants that hacendado "honor" cuts both ways. Adherence to traditional conceptions of "honor" seems to have increased traditional hacendado elite vulnerability in the face of social change. Many of my consultants expressed that the commitment to honorable behavior that is a taken-for-granted characteristic of their historical social prominence left their families vulnerable to unscrupulous indigenous organizers who spearheaded land invasions during two periods of agrarian reforms in the country. This recognized form of difference often took center stage in our discussions about the leaders and organizers of indigenous land invasions and strikes, who my consultants accused of having employed deceitful and corrupt methods that constitute the polar opposite of behaviors attributed to the honorable hacendados who regarded their peones as "family."

My consultants expressed a great deal of indignation related to the land invasions and expropriations their families experienced during the era of agrarian reform. They recounted several examples of unscrupulous behavior on the part of indigenous leaders and often suggested that I consider the similarities between those actions and those attributed to past hacendados. It was clear that many of my consultants' families experienced extreme anxiety over agrarian reform, and despite the quite paltry percentage of land that was taken through expropriation, they believe that in many cases the government failed them by aligning with indigenous demands for land redistribution. My consultants' stories about land invasions and expropriation emphasized that the negative light in which hacendados are viewed among non-elite Ecuadorians has been fueled, in part, by the machinations of indigenous and non-indigenous leaders (e.g., priests, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives and international social scientists).

Daniel, Mónica and Susana all come from families that have controlled large landholdings throughout the Ecuadorian highlands for many generations, and they each shared with me stories about having lands taken away or threatened by "deceitful practices" employed in the struggle for land reform. Like many of my consultants' patriarchs, Daniel's father was very fearful of losing the family's extensive landed assets to government expropriation after witnessing the results of Fidel Castro's rise to power in Cuba. Fearing the worst and wanting his children "to have a future beyond the farms," Daniel's father sent his children to be educated in the United States from the time that they were in elementary school. Daniel returned to Ecuador to reside full-time after completing post-doctorate work in the United States. Very soon after returning, his family became embroiled in a years-long battle to retain ownership of productive agricultural lands near Otavalo. Daniel ended up leaving a lucrative job in a high office within

the Ecuadorian government to help his family with the land issue. His experience with the process of land invasion and expropriation became quite personal:

It was a mixture of problems – there was turmoil in Ecuador in all farms. There was agitation and it had to happen. The communities next to [our hacienda] filed a suit against IERAC saying that they wanted to expropriate for their benefit because blah, blah, blah, blah blah... The law at that time permitted that and, in fact, it incited people to file a suit and get land reformed and get the land given to them. So I decided to help my father and I dedicated myself – I think it was four or five years – to that thing. Managing the farm, the legal aspect, preparing the defense, and it ended up with the final expropriation of the land. We always had the expectation that we would be able to save the land, obviously. So we got the lawyers and fought...but it didn't turn out that way. So the whole thing just collapsed for my father.

We had already in the 1960s transferred ownership of the huasipungos associated with the farm. There were accusations that the ex-employees were mistreating the neighboring communities. They invented all sort of things like that they were whipped! They always produced a witness that would claim, "I used to work and I was whipped..." It was very well-orchestrated, in that sense. The whole agrarian reform movement – getting the land depended on proving that we were all monsters. That we were monsters and that the farm was not producing – those were the two things. So, violating human rights – and they filed a suit against me for violating human rights so I had to defend myself to the Human Rights Commission here in Ecuador. ... The specific allegations against me were that we were using guns and shooting people. None of that was true! And they had gun shot [wounds] for whatever reason and they would go to the press, take their shirts off and say, "These are the gun shots that are happening because of..."

Daniel was successful in defending himself against the allegations of human rights abuses, allegations that painted a very dishonorable picture of his prestigious family.<sup>37</sup> However, the family ultimately lost this farm due to "demographic pressure." Daniel reported that the government did compensate the family for the land taken. Compensation was in the form of

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<sup>37</sup> Notably, one of Daniel's first cousins recounted this history to me as an example of a cautionary tale that was intended to demonstrate to me how beloved was his own immediate family by their indigenous workers, so much so that they had never had any problems like those that Daniel and his father experienced. This consultant conceded that Daniel's family "son gente muy buena" and "gente de avanzada, de empresas muy grandes" but these qualities made it difficult for them to cultivate familial-like bonds with their workers that could help stave off land invasions and demands for expropriation. Interestingly, another cousin relished in sharing with me juicy details about some of this family's "skeletons in the closet."



“bonos,” which Daniel described as “wallpaper” and worth so little in actual currency that the family never even picked them up from the government office.

Mónica’s family had a similar experience with one of their immense farms located in the southern portion of the Ecuadorian Andes. Mónica reported that this land invasion coincided with the “500 year anniversary of Columbus’ invasion” of the New World and groups involved in the commemoration movement were agitating indigenous communities to “demand the land back even though it is impossible to know who the land originally belonged to.” Nonetheless, the farm was invaded while the family was residing in their urban residences in Quito. Mónica asserted that the leaders of the invasion were deceitful and their behavior immoral. She described that the “invaders” took people to the hacienda and put them in a hole with dirty water and then filmed this to make it seem as though the family was guilty of mistreating the indigenous workers (“indios”). The leaders of the invasion (including a priest from Colombia) tried to get the hacienda’s 50 plus workers to sign a petition that claimed that the hacienda family was mistreating them but Mónica asserted that only two individuals eventually signed this petition. Mónica recounted that the hacienda workers later testified that the invasion was very bad for them and that the invaders had robbed and mistreated them. Over tea one afternoon in a beautiful gated community in Quito, Mónica described that the worst part of the invasion was that none of the hacienda workers ended up with any of the land that the family was forced to sell. Instead, Mónica claimed that the invasion leaders were actually “traficantes de tierra” who orchestrated the seizure of the land the family and then sold it to people completely unaffiliated with the communities within the hacienda. Mónica’s family fared somewhat better than their workers. The family had a very famous lawyer representing them in fighting the invasion and expropriation. Their lawyer secured a deal that the family would be paid for relinquishing all of

the land that lay above the hacienda house. As part of the deal, the family remained in control of all of the land below the hacienda house. According to Mónica, this was the first time that land invaders in Ecuador had paid landowners for land. Despite the “dishonorable” behavior that the family was forced to endure, they ended up with a good deal.<sup>38</sup>

Susana, a faculty member at a prestigious elite university and part of well-heeled hacienda families that retain valuable properties throughout the Ecuadorian Andes (including the provinces of Imbabura, Pichincha, Cotopaxi, and Azuay), wanted to make it clear to me that local participation in recent land invasions and levantamientos led by the national indigenous movement was more the result of coercion, intimidation and threats of financial retribution than animosity toward landowners or the current system of land tenure. Susana suggested that these tactics are evidence of racism within “*la sociedad indígena*,” which she claimed is especially acute in the Otavalo region where indigenous persons deemed more rural suffer persecution. According to Susana, “*nadie es más racista que los indios*” and beliefs about superiority and inferiority become acutely visible each time a strike of some kind is orchestrated by the national indigenous movement. Susana provided an example to support her assertions to me about the ways in which innocent “indios” have been duped into levantamiento participation through abuse and bullying committed by the national indigenous movement. Susana and family members were staying at their hacienda near Lago San Pablo in 1990 or 1992 (Susana was unsure about the exact date) when a large indigenous strike broke out, blocking all of the roads back to Quito.

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<sup>38</sup> Mónica also reported that it has always bothered the family that none of their workers ended up with any land after the invasion. Therefore, when her parents died, the remaining land on the hacienda was split into six pieces. Mónica and each of her four siblings received a share of the land and the sixth piece will be divided amongst the workers in return for their time working the land for the family. They will also have the option to purchase an additional piece of land.

As a result, the family – including a “*gringo*” relative from the United States who was sure they would be killed by “indios” – was unable to leave the hacienda for 24 days.

However, Susana reported that soon after the strike began, the family went walking through their property and realized that the “indios” in the area were going about their daily lives just as before the strike. So the family decided that staying at the farm would be safer than trying to get back to Quito. Because the roads were blocked, the farm was unable to send the milk from their dairy venture to the market for sale. Instead of throwing the milk out, they began to give it away to the “indios” in the area. When the “indios” came to the house for milk, Susana’s family would ask them why they were striking and the “indios” replied that the national movement was imposing hefty fines on any people who didn’t participate in the strike.<sup>39</sup>

Susana’s repeated use of term “indio” while describing racism and unscrupulous behavior within the Ecuadorian indigenous population is significant, as nearly all of my elite consultants described to me that use of that term in contemporary Ecuador is considered extremely derogatory and potentially racist. Most were very careful, especially when discussing Ecuadorian social relations with me, to use the terms “indígena” or “mestizo” when describing the communities surrounding and within their family haciendas. Most often, when elites use the term “indio,” it is with the specific purpose of signaling the inferiority and lower rank of indigenous individuals when compared with other Ecuadorian social groups. Susana typically made her intentions clear during our talks with carefully chosen phrases and pointed visual cues,

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<sup>39</sup> All of these stories about the “dishonorable” behavior of indigenous people in relation to land expropriations and invasions raise the question of whether or not they are true. The answer to that question likely depends on one’s perspective. Steve Striffler (2002) has written extensively about land struggles in Ecuador and describes that seized land often did not end up in the hands of those who needed it most. In addition, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:186–188) describes the important role that fines (*multas*) and *mingas* play in indigenous organizing. Regarding the accusations leveled against Daniel’s family of whippings and beatings during the invasion of family lands, such things did happen in Ecuador. The family of one of my close friends in Quito, Luis, actually worked Daniel’s family lands near Otavalo. Luis described being whipped as a young boy many times by the hacienda’s mayordomo because he was caught gathering medicinal plants that grew on the hacienda lands.

and this discussion was no different. Exasperated by the topic of indigenous protests (my words) and international media attention that painted the national indigenous movement as “noble” (Susana’s words), Susana offered that “all of us [hacendados] have had problems with the indios and these problems persist to the present day. Indios, especially those involved in the national indigenous movement, think that they own the country.” For many of my consultants, one of the biggest challenges they face today is a bad reputation that ignores their contributions while painting them as evil caricatures.

### Social Prejudice

Agrarian reforms had lasting consequences for hacendados that went far beyond the loss of land. Discussions with my consultants, as well as with people outside of this social circle, revealed that the changes wrought during the era of agrarian reforms in Ecuador transformed the ways in which non-elites perceive of and interact with traditional hacendado elites. A general sentiment among my elite consultants is that the greater population in Ecuador is misinformed about the country’s history and the contributions made by hacienda families. The result of this misinformation, according to many of my most prominent consultants, is that traditional hacendado elites face social prejudices that further separate them from the rest of the Ecuadorian population. Susana’s consternation about “indios” who “think that they own the country” provides insight into the anxiety that contemporary traditional hacendado elites are experiencing as the social landscape in neoliberal Ecuador continues to change. Some of the social “prejudice” that my consultants believe they are undergoing is the result of common perceptions of hacendados and haciendas as “evil” and “abusive.” This view certainly gained strength through publications like Izcaza’s *Huasipungo*, but the imagery of a stark social divide continues in more recent sources as varied as popular telenovelas and history textbooks (Moreno Yáñez et

al. 2008; Ayala Mora 2008) developed in recent years through the combined efforts of Ecuador's Ministerio de Educacion and the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, considered one of the country's most progressive universities. The result, as Jorge succinctly summarized, is that a relationship that once mirrored "family" now has made enemies of the patrón and peones. "Ahora," Jorge lamented with more than a hint of anger, "[peones] son más exigentes" (workers are more demanding).

Concerns about anti-elite social prejudices within the Ecuadorian population, as well as my consultants' perceptions of bias evident in Western scholarly depictions of Latin American social hierarchies, occasionally complicated my research and at times threatened some of my more fragile connections to traditional hacendado elite families. In fact, using the term "elite" turned out to be problematic for my field research. Several consultants who are scholars in Ecuador cautioned me about potentially negative connotations of the term. Sebastián and his wife warned me about the issue while we exercised at the exclusive Quito Tennis y Golf Club. The term "elite," they explained, is a loaded term in Ecuador that points to "leftist" ideologies. Members of "La Sociedad" - "las buenas familias" - typically consider use of the term to be "aggressive and anti-upper class." As a result of this and other similar conversations early in my research, I rarely used the term with my consultants.

Despite my attempts to assure my consultants that I was genuinely interested in understanding their experiences from their point of view, with some individuals it was quite difficult to overcome their distrust of my research motives. These instances of distrust rarely were voiced directly. One afternoon, I was feeling sorry for myself after facing another last-minute meeting cancellation and also learning that a close friend of one my consultants had been warning people within his social circle that I thought of them as "cuy" (guinea pigs, also

considered a delicacy, especially within Andean indigenous communities). I mentioned the hesitancy I was experiencing from some individuals to Teresa, who immediately responded that she wasn't surprised to hear it. However, Teresa suggested that the reason behind these responses had more to do with overall feelings of unease within the social circle than with my individual relationships. Teresa and other consultant confidantes described that some of my consultants "had bad experiences in the past when they talked to outsiders about their families." These experiences have left many of my consultants wary about what the reactions to their stories might be. They worry specifically about the government using their information to facilitate and justify taking more land, property and capital from them.

The anti-elite bias that my elite consultants described exposes a complex social dilemma that highlights another apparent elite duality in Andean Ecuador – the double-edged nature of genealogy. On the one hand, ancestry is important. It opens doors and provides a road map for social inclusion. On the other hand, the exclusions that derive from misplaced ancestry can be dangerous and threatening. My consultants expressed an uneasiness that shed light on their fears that the historic prominence of traditional hacendado elite families has, in some ways, become a risk or a liability because it makes them and their remaining capital more vulnerable. Their ancestors may have been revolutionary leaders, presidents and innovators, but that doesn't mean that the rest of Ecuadorian society wants to be reminded about their "achievements." Teresa explained the dilemma:

There is prejudice against the Spanish side of Ecuadorian history and against people from las buenas familias. People within the good families don't want to say anything about who they are por vergüenza. If you talk about your history or your family, people think you are elitist and racist. The people here try to ignore Spanish history in Ecuador but the city and the country is full of Spanish customs. When people visit us from Spain, they are amazed that there are so many Spanish customs in Ecuador that have been lost or forgotten in Spain. But most Ecuadorians don't have an interest in this part of the history and there is an

overall lack of knowledge about the role played by the buenas familias in Ecuadorian history. I believe this is due to Communism and its emphasis on class wars. The message to us is loud and clear. People from las buenas familias should keep quiet and stay out of sight so that they don't lose *everything*.

Our conversations about this topic inevitably turned to education and educational biases in Ecuador and within Western research about Ecuadorian society. Gabriel, one of my consultants in his thirties with whom I have spent a lot of time over the years, affirmed that the topic of my research and my chosen field (cultural anthropology) made some people nervous about my motives (while others plainly dismissed the notion that a lowly – clearly middle-class – gringa would be able to wield any power). Gabriel focused squarely on U.S. and European anthropological studies about Ecuador, which he described as “always talking about indígenas and treating them as ‘noble savages’ fighting against treachery.” Gabriel reminded me that “everything has *dos caras* (two faces), even studies” but “*your* studies (i.e., U.S. ethnographies) often show only one face or the other, just the good or just the bad.” Carlito was blunter with me. Clearly dismayed by his own assessment of anti-hacendado bias and bored by my own ignorance about it, Carlito interrupted an interview I was carrying out with another consultant and told me plainly, “Jennifer! Look, there is a prejudice against Spanish families now. These days anything in Ecuador’s history that doesn’t deal with ‘indios’ is rejected. Basta!” This perceived approach to scholarship about Ecuador clearly made some of my consultants nervous about my intentions and how they might align with or support the dominant themes transmitted by the Ecuadorian public school system.

Despite a palpable fear of retribution among many with whom I spoke, my consultants expressed a contradicting desire for the wider population to know about their families’ contributions to the country. While many worried that this would potentially open them up to

social attacks and, even worse, expropriation of their remaining resources and goods, others expressed that an effective and responsible education system would tell all sides of the story. Consider the following exchange with one of the descendants of Ecuadorian independence movement leader Carlos Montúfar about a conference paper written by an esteemed Ecuadorian history professor and friend:

Jennifer: In that paper that Espinosa wrote recently, he mentioned that there is a certain amount of ignorance in Quiteño society about Carlos Montúfar. What do you think he meant in that discussion?

Consultant: I think what Espinosa is saying is that Carlos Montúfar doesn't get the recognition that he should. He has kind of been put aside and not really recognized for what he did for the independence movement. But I think that the history is there, but it hasn't been given the same importance because he was part of the nobility or whatever. Rather than being like Espejo<sup>40</sup> or whatever. It may seem like the historians give more precedence to other independence movement figures, but I don't know.

My consultant in the above passage was careful to offer only a tentative interpretation of the paper's thesis while still suggesting that current lessons about Ecuadorian history lack some relevant information about the positive contributions made by members of the landowning elite. And while consultants like Teresa expressed that the historic record "needs to be set straight," many of them questioned whether people outside of their social circle would care or, even worse, if they did care such information might just increase the envy and anger that the wider Ecuadorian population already feels about people in their social circle.

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<sup>40</sup> Eugenio Espejo was an important figure in colonial Ecuador. He was a vocal critic of the colonial system in Ecuador, especially the lack of education within the Audencia of Quito. Scholars and historians also credit Espejo with inspiring the separatist movement in the Audencia that would eventually result in Ecuadorian independence. Osvaldo Hurtado (1980:96) describes Espejo's separatist ideology as "libertarian." It is widely believed that Eugenio Espejo was of indigenous and mulatto descent and this ethnic heritage shaped his critiques of Ecuadorian colonial society (Benavides 2004:40–41). However, this claim, and the parallel claim that Espejo represents an early example of how educated individuals of indigenous descent can be successful *despite* their indigeneity, has recently become a topic of debate. Ecuadorian scholar, Carlos Freile Granizo, recently published a book that calls into question Espejo's indigenous background (Espejo and Granizo 2008).



It is important to note that many consultants explicitly linked this lack of knowledge (or acknowledgment) about traditional hacendado elite contributions to failings of the Ecuadorian public education system:

Many of the problems in Ecuador are the result of a lack of education. The bias against true history is changing, but very slowly. There are now at least two professors at USFQ [the Universidad San Francisco de Quito] who are mentioning the role of las buenas familias in some of their classes. However, this is happening at USFQ. If you go to one of the public universities in Ecuador, you won't hear anything about that part of history. (Carolina)

Furthermore, these comments were often part of larger discussions about the poor quality of public education in Ecuador and how the failings of this system contribute to the country's lack of progress, rampant governmental corruption and growing "class warfare." According to many of my consultants, Ecuador's public education is failing not least of all because it presents a biased and skewed representation of Ecuadorian history and, in the process, transmits ideals that are contrary to traditional hacendado elite notions of honor and value.

#### Traditional Hacendado Elite Economics Today

Not all of the individuals with whom I discussed contemporary Ecuadorian social relations universally shared the sentiment expressed above about the causes of some of Ecuador's most pressing problems. Some people on the margins of the traditional hacendado elite social circle were keen to talk to me about socioeconomic and political changes that have weakened my consultants' claims to social power. These were always lively discussions that only occurred in private, usually after an evening fiesta or dinner party. During these private conversations, people would reveal their angst about their own marginal status in the social environs inhabited by my consultants. I could empathize with their feelings of marginality, as my own position was precarious and constantly under negotiation. Despite their individual

concerns about their place within the social circle, these individuals really wanted me to understand that things have changed in the country and those changes have loosened (or demolished) the hold that traditional hacendado elite families have on power in Ecuador. In the wee hours of Christmas morning following a long Christmas Eve celebration, Guido plainly told me that hacendado families are “no longer of any consequence in the country.” Not only are these families unable to generate wealth on their farms (if they even still have the farms), but they have also lost all of the social power they once commanded. Yes, Guido conceded, most people in the country will recognize their names, but “no one really care if one has a good apellido. Haciendas and hacendados are worthless.” Guido definitely had not expressed any such sentiments during our long evening of *novenas*, gift exchange and an elaborate but familial supper.

But now, in the privacy of my Quito apartment, Guido expressed that social relations started changing with the discovery of oil in Ecuador. According to Guido, prior to the discovery of oil, landowners in the highlands and on the coast were able to hold the state captive because it did not have any of its own resources. After the discovery of oil, the state, controlled at that time by a military junta, gained a great deal of strength and gained autonomy from large landowners. The state was able to create a middle class and to advance projects aimed at closing the wide gap between the “haves” and “have nots.” Guido also described that soon after the country returned to “democracy,” the state became infested with corruption that has continued to the present day. He concluded that the most important people in Ecuador today are “bankers, *comerciantes*, and flower people but they aren’t very trustworthy.” My traditional hacendado elite consultants would likely agree with Guido’s assertion that there is no “honor” in much of Ecuadorian politics

and business today, while also distancing themselves as much as possible from their own significant connections to those realms.

One thing is clear, for better or worse the economic landscape for traditional hacendado elites (and most other Ecuadorians) has changed since the period of agrarian reforms. As I discussed in Chapters Two and Three, while many of my consultants began experiencing economic decline with the onset of agrarian reforms, other elite factions have seen their economic fortunes blossom within Ecuador's changing socioeconomic contexts. While some families lost wealth as a result of land invasions and government expropriation, I learned through gossip that others witnessed the loss of huge fortunes as a result of careless and lavish spending. Sometimes my consultants discussed the positive changes that resulted from other consultants' economic decline. Angelina recounted one of these cautionary but optimistic tales to me about one of my other consultants, Manuel, that I heard retold by others in various versions several times during multiple research trips. Manuel's family is descended from Spanish nobility and, until fairly recently, great wealth. Angelina loved to share stories with me about the lavish black-tie parties that Manuel's parents held where at least one servant exclusively attended to each guest. In addition, Manuel's father was apparently a very generous man who enjoyed passing out beautiful ponchos (produced in one of the family's *obrajes*) to indigenous people in the many communities surrounding their family haciendas. Angelina only had positive remarks about Manuel's parents and grandparents, but her relationship with Manuel is more complex. While they are peers who regularly socialize now and grew up together in the same, intimate social circle, Angelina explained that Manuel was "very snobby and medio-nerd" (nerdy) while growing up due to his extreme wealth. I had already heard from other consultants that Manuel's family had lost most of their money in one generation as a result of gambling, travel back and

forth to Europe and lavish spending without working or being responsible business people. Angelina was discreet about much of this gossip, but she wanted me to know that while today Manuel is “as warm as can be, extremely nice and generous,” that wasn’t always the case. According to Angelina, the family’s loss of wealth humbled Manuel and made him a nicer person. The change in fortune may have also paved the way for opening up a family hacienda to a new business venture that can create new forms of wealth by drawing on distinctions of the past, as discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. For now, I highlight this story of changing fortunes to underscore that my consultants are hyperaware that economic decline can and does affect even the most solidly elite and aristocratic families among them. And while it may result in “humbling” that levels the social playing field a bit in favor of families that possess less direct ties to the aristocracy or modest means among traditional hacendado elites, the pressure is still on to ensure that such changes in fortune don’t result into a downward slide that lands one squarely outside of the traditional hacendado elite distinction.

The loss of income among traditional hacendado elites doesn’t stop the relentless pressure to demonstrate elite distinction through consumption. As Susana informed me, “[members of las buenas familias] have to keep their families going like previous generations or better.” Over generations a certain style of life has been cultivated that is not only extremely comfortable but also expected by peers. These expectations of self and others don’t always align with a family’s access to currency. While describing some of the tensions encountered when starting up a new family hacienda business, a close confidante of mine discussed her mother-in-law’s approach to spending:

She is used to spending a lot of money because her family has always had it and she really likes to spend it. For example, my mother-in-law and father-in-law are in Europe for three months right now. They won’t rent a car or use taxis for three months. Instead, they will buy a new car and sell it when they leave. They are

using an apartment during this visit but they usually pay to stay in a luxury hotel for three months. This is what she knows and how she has lived for all of her life.

I had interviewed my confidante's father-in-law prior to this conversation, and his comments revealed a potential disconnect between the manner in which they have "lived for all of [their] lives" and their current economic circumstances. He shared with me his desire to sell one of the family's extremely productive haciendas that is dedicated to agriculture. I was surprised to learn that he would readily part with such a business that is so successful and asked him why this was so. His response was that "a lot of hacendados are worth many millions of dollars in property but don't have access to this wealth in daily life. I'd like to sell [the hacienda] and have some tranquilidad in daily life." Selling off some family property could bring a welcome injection of cash to help them continue to live in the manner that they are accustomed and which their extended family, friends and longtime workers expect.

My consultant above was willing to part voluntarily with hacienda property if doing so would bring an influx of cash. However, I heard several other stories about individuals and families who had used hacienda properties as collateral for cash loans to maintain their lifestyles and subsequently lost the land and homes when they were unable to pay back the loans. More and more, traditional hacendado elites are apparently relying on credit to maintain the appearance of elite distinction. Some of my consultants expressed derision about this increasing dependence on credit among traditional hacendado elites. Alicia's take on the situation was mild but pointed as she explained that "some *gente de nombres* really don't have money anymore. They live lives of appearance only. They live in their big houses, have many empleadas, drive nice cars, dress well and take vacations to Miami or Europe. But they do it all on credit, either with credit cards or with loans – all with very high interest rates - because they don't have 'plata'

anymore.” Alicia offered a concrete example from her husband’s luxury automobile business in Quito. She explained that sometimes they sell these cars to “gente de nombres” but those buyers usually purchase the cars on credit. By contrast, most of the people they sell these cars to come in with large bags full of cash to purchase a \$200,000 car. According to Alicia and her mother, “These are not gente de nombres. These people live completely different lives than us. They have tons of cash because they don’t spend it on the ways of living that we do. They live in their barrios in small houses. They build their houses and everyone lives in a couple of rooms. They don’t spend money on furnishing the house nicely, they don’t eat good food and they dress poorly or in inexpensive clothes. This way they are able to save all of their money.” Alicia’s mother went even farther and stated that the cash-wielding customers who are distinctly not “gente de nombres” are actually “...longos y cholos who now have lots of money. They have the best cars in the city. They have the most money in the country now. They don’t pay impuestos (taxes). They lack cultura, educación and valores.” The practice of characterizing newly wealthy Quiteños as “cholos” or “longos” was not uncommon. These are inflammatory statements intended to draw a stark division between honorable “gente de nombres” and the dishonest newly rich who my consultants conclude are benefitting from the country’s rampant corruption while they themselves are held to a different standard.

For better or worse, people know the names of traditional hacendado elites in Quito. I’ve already discussed my consultants’ ambivalence about name recognition and its accompanying notoriety. However, it is also worth noting how this infamy may intersect with their economic conditions and perceived ability to navigate new business circumstances. Because my consultants are known in the country and feel pressure to adhere to an intrinsic traditional

hacendado elite code of honor, many believe that they are also under a higher level of public and governmental scrutiny about the way that they conduct themselves and their business ventures:

Jennifer: Why don't *gente conocida* and hacendados have plata anymore?

Angelina: Because they have to pay impuestos (taxes) and all the other things. We have to do things legally. If we didn't, everyone would know and we would be sent to prison.

In this sense, my consultants experience and navigate another duality that separates them from the rest of the population. In discussions about the challenges that a new generation of hacendados face in establishing profitable new hacienda business ventures, Valeria referred to this phenomenon as a “double economy:”

We have a “double economy.” We have the economy of the state and the government. On the other hand, there is the other economy. This person buys potatoes from their neighbor who doesn't give receipts. For example, we search for products to buy from the *gente* of la zona. But now I can't buy papas from Roberto in la zona because I need a receipt for my taxes and Roberto doesn't have receipts. Therefore, my bookkeeping demands that if I want to do things within the law, I have to buy from Mercedes at the market who can give me receipts – blah, blah, blah...

It would seem that traditional hacendado elites who may be faced economic decline are potentially between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Reliance on credit to maintain appearances is risky and regarded by many as weakness and vulnerability to social descent. On the other hand, “*gente de nombres*” are expected to personify a particular form of honor that dictates adherence to the law and at least the appearance of transparency in business dealings. Taking “shortcuts” may save them money or create advantages in the marketplace but they may also result in increased risk if traditional hacendado elites are truly under more scrutiny and surveillance than other sectors of Andean society.

Conversely, I want to point out that the name recognition and social prominence that these families enjoy also creates advantages that are not often available to other Ecuadorians working to generate wealth through new types of business opportunities. While Alicia and other consultants openly scoffed at some of their peers' reliance on credit to "keep up appearances," the very fact that these individuals and families were able to access and mostly afford the payments associated with credit cards and bank loans in Ecuador is a testament to their continuing advantages. Access to lines of credit also positions these families squarely within the modern global economy. This type of financial resource was out of reach for most Ecuadorians while I was conducting research in Andean Ecuador. They simply did not have the option of credit or loans to fall back on in times of scarcity. Even if they could succeed in securing a loan (decisions which are based on far more subjective criteria and assessments than simply one's risk of financial default), most would be hard pressed to afford the double-digit interest rates that were attached to both bank loans and credit cards. My consultants' success in acquiring large bank loans across many generations has made it possible for many of them to make elaborate investments in new business ventures to increase their economic capital while also reaffirming their historically based cultural capital and elite distinction. Some of these ventures are tied directly to family haciendas (see Chapter Five), while others have focused squarely on the social field of education and its promise of upward social mobility through the acquisition of institutionalized cultural capital in the form of educational credentials. Both approaches have proved particularly effective in reaffirming the social boundaries that separate traditional hacendado elites from Ecuador's population of non-elites. This has been accomplished by both reaffirming the long-standing elite classification systems of social distinction and generating new forms of economic capital explicitly linked to elite forms of cultural capital.



## **Progress Through Education**

Pierre Bourdieu has theorized that the educational system serves as the main battlefield for class struggle in advanced capitalism (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:129; Joppke 1986:74). Bourdieu argued that in contemporary capitalist societies the reproduction of class structure is no longer accomplished by the direct inheritance of occupational positions or the legal inheritance of economic capital. Rather, class structure and the dominant positions of elites within that structure come about through the inheritance of cultural knowledge in the form of cultural capital. Prestigious positions in the occupational system are linked to the possession of academic titles, the most important form of institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Traditional hacendado elites, as well as individuals within other elite factions, have historically enjoyed exposure and access to education. Their educational credentials earned from private schools in Ecuador and abroad have virtually assured that they continue to hold important professional positions as the country's economy has shifted from primarily an agrarian system based on a virtual monopoly over land and labor to a more globalized capitalist economy reliant on the extraction and worldwide trade of Ecuadorian resources. In addition to providing access to important occupational positions by way of educational titles, my consultants have also long been aware that control of the institutional sphere of education plays an important role in the intergenerational reproduction of the dominant classes by ensuring that the realm of "legitimate culture" reflects elite cultural competencies. Many of the families with whom I worked have capitalized on the powerful potential of education in order to maintain and expand their prestige and positions of social and economic power.

Popular historical representations of hacendados in Ecuador often emphasize a penchant for lavish spending on European goods and travels while concomitantly refusing any attempts at

modernization or progressive development. However, my research revealed another facet of traditional hacendado elite history, one which has highlighted the strategic importance of education in safeguarding the existing status quo of Ecuadorian social hierarchy while also encouraging progressive economic and political development in the country. Consultants discussed the foresight of individuals from earlier generations who “saw the writing on the wall” and recognized that the structure of the hacienda era would not be sustainable in changing social, political and economic contexts within Ecuador. Family members explained that even before the era of agrarian reforms, education was important to elites because it underscored their civility (especially in relation to the uneducated masses). After the reforms, its importance grew exponentially as those future-oriented traditional hacendado elites recognized the power of education to secure their own children’s futures while also potentially capitalizing on the progressive push for expanded educational opportunities among elites and within the society at large. My consultants described how many of their ancestors realized that the power of the hacendado was on the wane in the period leading up to agrarian reforms in Ecuador and that quality education was the best way for their children to secure their privileged positions socially and economically:

My grandfather was very much afraid about the future of Ecuador and he was very strict about education. He maybe overdid it – he had my dad and my uncles learning Russian and stuff when they were home from military school – they didn’t have a life because he was very, very strict and his sons feared him. My grandfather came from the old ways and maybe he broke that tradition some with his children. My grandfather’s father was very, very wealthy and had like 22 farms or something and each one was huge. Not all of his farms came from inheritance – he really worked hard during his lifetime to make that. Maybe it was in the business of cascarilla. My grandfather didn’t want his kids to be just dependent and working on the farms – he wanted them to have professional degrees and, like my uncle, to be involved in banking. He sent them to school and was very, very strict and rigid about education. He inherited *a lot* of stuff and he didn’t want his children to be dependent on it or waste it. You know, there is a typical saying – the first generation creates, the second makes it better, and the

third wipes it out. I think he wanted to conserve what he got and what previous generations had conserved. I think that was very tough on him to lose a fortune that many generations had built.<sup>41</sup>

Several consultants linked their families continued success to the United States system of schooling with its emphasis on democratic ideals and entrepreneurialism that fueled a growing economy based on capitalism. Daniel explained how his father, who had been educated in France, as was the custom at the time, made the decision to send his elementary school-aged children to be educated in the United States where they would go on to receive advanced degrees from prestigious universities before returning to reside in Ecuador:

This was a way to save us. Get them an education, and if we lose everything in Ecuador they'll have that to fall back on. Eventually these kids will become gringo citizens, and they'll have a life made. None of that happened, but... that was my father's perspective.

Both of Daniel's parents recognized the importance of education and were especially keen on the United States system of education. His mother had been educated in the United States while her father served as Ecuadorian Ambassador to England. Later, she went on to receive a Bachelor's degree from a university in Los Angeles. Daniel's parents wanted their children to benefit from the ideals and values instilled through schooling in the United States so that they would be prepared for the best colleges and business opportunities in the United States. Quality education steeped in the tenets of liberal arts within an economic system based on capitalism undergirded by democratic ideals was attractive not only because it resonated with elite conceptions of civilization but also because it promised continued access to occupations associated with the growing economic markets within and beyond Ecuador.

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<sup>41</sup> This consultant's family had lost several productive haciendas to expropriation and indigenous land invasions. However, his grandfather's fortune remained considerable and was passed on to his children upon his death.

While many of my consultants described their ancestors' embrace of education and the potential offered by educational titles for assisting future generations to retain and grow economic, political and capital, some consultants whose families had been hard hit by agrarian reforms and other socioeconomic changes were guarded when discussing the growing importance of educational credentials as markers of distinction. By and large, these consultants were among the families that Valeria had described in Chapter Three as solid members of the "clase alta" even though they had lost much or all of their economic wealth. Alicia, one of my female consultants who is in her 40s, holds an advanced degree from a United States university and had extensive experience travelling and working internationally before settling with her husband back in Ecuador and becoming a successful business owner, discussed what the transition was like for her parents' generation. She described that her parents' generation was the first to experience the change from the overriding importance of apellidos in defining the membership of the "clase alta" to the importance of "títulos." This transition was especially difficult for her parents, whose economic situation was more precarious than most of their peers. Sending children abroad to attend university in the United States or elsewhere was important for their futures, but it could also be costly. While it is true that persons in Ecuador who boast the "good" apellidos typically have more opportunities than the general population to attend elite colegios that help pave the way to university credentials, some traditional hacendado elite families struggle to make this happen for their children.

Within Ecuador, there is a clear hierarchy of educational institutions and a matching hierarchy of economic and social costs associated with attending those schools. The range of acceptable options for elite schooling is limited in number, and tuitions are exceptionally high by Ecuadorian standards. My research in Ecuador suggested that the ability to pursue educational

credentials is not equally shared among traditional hacendado elites. At the same time, it is also true that these families are able to tap into resources such as strong extended family ties, social networks, and even credit that help ensure access to high-quality schools. Despite the difficulties some of my consultants may have encountered in the quest for institutionalized cultural capital, they all espoused the value of education for the masses to facilitate social mobility and encourage the country's future development. In line with elite projects of nationalist development that took hold in the first half of the twentieth century, my consultants were adamant that Ecuador's greatest problem in the 21st century continues to be a profound lack of education among the wider population that is holding the country back from "progressing" in terms of both democratic ideals and full participation in the global economy.

#### Mestizaje, Education and Social Mobility

*"En América Latina, cambios profundos y significativos deben darse en el campo de la educación, bien si la educación es reconocida como un derecho universal básico o bien si está diseñada explícitamente para server a los intereses del crecimiento económico, para incrementar el ingreso nacional y el bienestar humano. Si la educación debe servir al desarrollo económico, la planificación es un requisito, y a medida que el desarrollo genera demandas de cambio, la planificación educacional requiere un espíritu de innovación y, en ciertos casos, el abandono de actitudes tradicionales."* Galo Plaza Lasso, 1964 quoted in (Salgado and de la Torre 2008:139–140).

In Chapter One, I discussed the elite-led program of national identity construction and economic development based on an assimilation process of mestizaje whereby indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians adopt the values and practices of a national culture defined by "white" elites. Regardless of how effective the push for assimilation may or may not be in highland Ecuador, I want to emphasize here that my consultants consistently pointed to education as a necessary component of nation-building and socioeconomic development. In

their view, education will ameliorate disadvantages associated with cultural norms and practices that do not align with the realm of legitimate culture, as defined by Ecuadorian elites. According to my consultants, Ecuador's "problems" do not stem from structural inequities or racial discrimination, but rather are the result of cultural differences. As Norman Whitten (2003b:56) has suggested, mestizaje entails a downward projection of mixture from elites that wherein the promise of upward mobility is contingent upon learning and embodying the knowledge and practice of the dominant culture through a process of blanqueamiento. While my consultants demonstrated quite a bit of internal conflict related to the classification of "mestizo" (discussed below), they expressed support for blanqueamiento if it meant that people would "learn to live like us." The benefits derived from this process were obvious to them, as it meant that more Ecuadorians embraced "modernity" and civilization for the good of the country's development.

Former President and famous hacendado, Galo Plaza Lasso, recognized that education could play a key role both in instilling democratic ideals in the nation and in creating a population of producers who also had an appetite for consumption, a cornerstone of any market-based economic system. His heirs and his peers are proud of his accomplishments and his progressive approach to issues like popular education and agrarian reforms, a process that Don Galo initiated on family haciendas long before law required it. His descendants shared his philosophy about education during several conversations and similar sentiments were expressed by other consultants on various occasions:

It takes someone extremely valiente to be an agent of change. He saw education as key to that process – people in the community were able to go to Zuleta, get an education and then have steady jobs as maids, chofers, etc. and then slowly climb the job ladder. They were not selling fruits and things on the corner. Those people were then able to send their children to school and to university and that gave them at least 40 years of a push. Galo Plaza stressed the importance of quality education – he provided the school and teachers. Still today people in the

community feel that the education that Galo Plaza provided through the teachers was much better than they can receive today.

A key to progress is having better educated employees – people who are going to migrate with a better education. I think that he knew that people were going to leave the countryside and go toward “the city lights” and he knew they would be better off with a good education. He wanted to give them a better chance of surviving in the city lights. Galo Plaza came from the states with the tradition of free education – he was educated in the states and he wanted to have a different type of partner in labor. He wanted a worker who had an education, who was proud, who had his own land with a title, with water, with education, with health. He always said that “the seeds of change have to be planted very early if you want democracy.”

What was striking to me in these conversations was how my consultants viewed the path to social mobility. A quality education received in the hacienda community could provide workers with opportunities to secure work as maids or chauffeurs in the service of those higher up the “job ladder.” Presumably, this type of work is more in line with elite ideals than selling fruit or other items on the streets of Quito (which, using my consultants own logic could also easily be associated with “modernity” insofar as they represent forms of “entrepreneurialism”). The main difference between work on the hacienda and the next rung on the job ladder appears to be a move that more fully immerses workers in unequal relationships based on wage labor rather than those based on mutual obligations. In short, one benefit of an educated public is the creation of workers who are well-versed in capitalist labor relations.

Many traditional hacendado elites share Galo Plaza Lasso’s vision of an educated public that participates in the economy as full-fledged consumers while patiently climbing the ladder toward socioeconomic security. However, theirs is a complicated vision of mestizaje where education, or the lack thereof, can also define the limits of social mobility and the possibilities of “cultural improvement” among non-elite Ecuadorians. Despite elite protestations that racism

does not exist in Ecuador, discussions about popular education more often than not invoked racialized discourse to explain how non-elites, including those who are gaining wealth, are also holding back progress in the country by refusing to invest in education or spend their money on things that demonstrate cultural improvement. One afternoon following one of our very long lunches in Angelina's North Quito home, our conversation wound its way to the southern portion of the city and the large urban population living there. According to Angelina, many people in that part of the city are acquiring money through all sorts of illicit business practices, such as selling pirated DVDs. She also asserted that most of the people who live in "el sur de Quito" are "ignorant" and only strive for money "to show themselves" rather than to invest in "important things like education and their homes." To illustrate what she considered the obvious ignorance of their ways, Angelina shared three stories with me about people in her life (*empleadas*) who hail from el sur and are "longos," "indios," "*pura pata*" (without shoes, literally "pure hooves or paws") and "cholos" who have improved their lives through hard work and investment in their homes and in their children's education. In each of the three cases, the mothers worked extremely hard to put their children through colegio, often having to rely on gifts of food from Angelina's extended family. In the end, the children went on to become "successful professionals" who are taking care of their mothers. When I suggested that these cases perhaps demonstrated that upward mobility in the larger population is positive, Angelina replied "Yes, those cases are very, very positive, but most people from that social group aren't like that. Most of the people down in el sur with money don't care about things like education or family. The majority don't care. They just want to show themselves and be ignorant."

It is impossible to ignore Angelina's racialization of the people from "el sur" whose incomes are rising but perhaps not their status because they do not conform to the norms of



behavior championed by elites. Education in Ecuador, as in many Latin American nations, has consistently been viewed by elites as a mechanism for transforming “backward” populations into “modern” citizens by instilling bourgeois ideals and qualities (Hurtado 1980; de la Cadena 1998; de la Torre 2000; Novo and de la Torre 2010; Stutzman 1981; Whitten 1981b). Education becomes a powerful tool for the cultural “whitening” of the population. In this way, the educational realm reflects the limitations of solely class-based analyses of social relations by underscoring the role of racialized classificatory schemes in post-colonial social relations. Education becomes a marker of social difference and, despite the claims to contrary, does not ultimately act as a social equalizer. Rather, while education may result in improved economic standing, discrimination based on race and ethnicity may also limit status mobility (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; de la Torre 2000; Johnson 2011; Novo and de la Torre 2010). Education as a key component of mestizaje in Ecuador provides another arena within which elites are able to redraw racial boundaries and patrol the borders of their tightly knit social circles. Education may provide social mobility and, indeed, elites often tout this progressive benefit of expanded educational opportunities, but there are limits to this mobility and, as I discuss below, these limits often have racial overtones even when couched in language about cultural knowledge. One of the most potent approaches for reinforcing social boundaries is maintaining control over highly valued educational resources. In Ecuador, the most prestigious schools continue to be private, elite-led institutions, some of which my traditional hacendado elite consultants established and/or lead today.

### The Business of Elite Education

Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1996; 1987; 1990; 2001; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Joppke 1986; Navarro 2006; Swartz 1997; Wacquant 1996; Weininger 2002) contends that the

educational system is a social field that the dominant class attempts to control for its own display of cultural power and social reproduction. It is through control of this institutional sphere that elites in advanced capitalist societies accomplish intergenerational reproduction. The reproduction and consolidation of Ecuadorian elite status and privilege is assisted by attendance at elite colegios and universities in Ecuador or abroad. Individuals within and outside of traditional hacendado elite social circles described advantages that accrue from elite education. Dominance in the realm of education benefits social and economic elites by instilling in them the qualities and competencies required for successfully maneuvering in the global economy (i.e., business practices and political economic strategies). Furthermore, educational rewards extend to alliances formed with external global elites. Most importantly, Ecuadorian elites send their children to schools with the children of other economic and social elites. This not only results in the transmission of competencies related to the realm of “legitimate culture,” but also leads to creation of alliances with the country’s future power brokers. Such alliances result in lifelong connections and opportunities that benefit elites economically and socially. In addition, participation in and control of elite educational institutions provides another avenue through which many of my consultants can capitalize on the increasing wealth of Ecuadorians who want to invest in education to improve their status and position through the acquisition of educational credentials and other benefits that accrue from participating in elite networks.

My traditional hacendado elite consultants espoused strong support for education and openly championed the idea that all Ecuadorians should strive for more and better educational opportunities. Sometimes these discussions revolved around “community projects” they were sponsoring in association with hacienda tourism enterprises (see Chapter Five), but often our conversations focused on the quality of education available in Ecuador and the need for more

“Western-style” education that prepares Ecuadorians to compete in the global marketplace. All of my consultants contend that the most “prepared” Ecuadorians have attended elite private colegios. Several of the families with whom I worked have been at the forefront of elite education in the country, and many have turned this social field into profitable business enterprises.

Galo Plaza Lasso’s observation that “the seeds of change have to be planted very early if you want democracy” underscored the important link between the educational system and national development. Much of his own schooling took place in the United States and he was quite open about his affection for the United States approach to education. Galo Plaza Lasso recognized in the U.S. educational system a comfortable relationship between democratic political ideology and capitalistic economic development and resolved to replicate it in his home country. He established the Colegio Americano de Quito in 1940 with the intent to provide quality private education that was divorced from religious doctrine and committed to democratic traditions. One of his children talked with me about the moment that spurred their father to establish a school that emulated the education tradition in the United States:

Mi papá fue el que fundó el colegio y fundó el colegio... cuando mis hermanas, mis dos hermanos mayores, iban la una al primer grado y la otra al kindergarten, iban al colegio alemán y nosotros vivíamos en la 6 de diciembre y Wilson. De la casa, de la casa de la 6 de diciembre, pasando la Wilson, al final de la Wilson que era la Amazonas, estaba el colegio Alemán y entonces mis dos hermanas chiquitas se iban a pie y mis papás les veían desde la casa hasta que lleguen al colegio y un día regresaron del colegio y mi hermana mayor le saludó a mi papá y le dijo: Hal Hitler.<sup>42</sup> Mi papá perdió la cabeza!

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<sup>42</sup> Galo Plaza Lasso’s living descendants emphasized that his motivation for establishing the Colegio Americano de Quito was an explicit rejection of fascism, which was on the rise in Europe and the tenets of which were being taught in Ecuadorian private schools associated with Germany and Italy. Interestingly, my consultants recounted a similar origin story for the Colegio Experimental Alberto Einstein, which was reportedly established in response to an incident that transpired at the Colegio Americano in the 1970s. Sebastián was a student at Colegio Americano at the time and he shared the following history with me:

Les llamó Benjamín Carrión, que era un escritor, embajador y llamó a un grupo de amigos y les propuso fundar un nuevo colegio y él quería fundar un colegio que sea de hombres y mujeres y que en ese tiempo no había, no había colegio mixto. Y que sea un colegio como él había visto en los Estados Unidos y como se le educaron allá en que había mucha libertad y mucho deporte.

Colegio Americano, as well as other similar elite institutions, professes a dedication to democratic ideals but it has always been an elite institution attended by the children of some of the country's most wealthy and socially distinguished families, as well as the children of international business leaders resident in Ecuador. Galo Plaza Lasso wanted to ensure that the future leaders of the country were educated with democratic values that aligned well with economic development. The colegio offers bilingual education that prepares students for entry at prestigious universities in the United States, Europe and, more recently, within Ecuador. With tuition starting at \$5,000.00 per year for kindergarten, Colegio Americano is similar to other private schools attended by elites in Ecuador but very much out of reach financially for most Ecuadorians. By all accounts, the colegio and its outward-looking orientation has been a success. Many of my consultants are graduates of the school, and until the more recent establishment of prestigious colegios in the valley to the east of Quito, they tended to send their own children to Colegio Americano. When I queried Susana about the appeal of Colegio Americano, she responded "Americano is a phenomenon. When people are looking through résumés, they will set aside all of those from Americano students to review. Those are the

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"There are many Jewish families in the elite social class. I went to school at Americano with children from many of these families. One year when I was around 14 years old we were given an assignment to read a book and give a presentation on the book to the rest of the school. One of my classmates – Eduardo [from a well-known hacienda family] – read a book about Hitler that was actually a rejection of the holocaust history and a Hitler apology story. While Eduardo was giving his presentation, many people became upset and one of the teachers told an administrator that they should stop Eduardo from continuing with the presentation. The administrator said that "freedom of speech" was a guiding principle of Americano and therefore he would let Eduardo finish his presentation. The very next year Colegio Alberto Einstein was formed and many of the Jewish families pulled their children from Americano and sent them to the new colegio."

people that businesses want to hire. And now the same happens with graduates from Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito [in Cumbayá].” As elites and upwardly mobile Ecuadorians have made the move to suburban enclaves in valley communities like Cumbayá and Tumbaco, the demand for educational institutions that cater to these families has grown, giving rise to the prestigious Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito (Colegio Menor) and the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ).<sup>43</sup>

In keeping with a long history of Ecuadorian elite outward orientation and identification with Euro-American lifestyle preferences and values, private schools like Colegio Americano and Colegio Menor are committed to an educational philosophy that emulates that offered in the United States. There is an emphasis on English language immersion and the importance of language and other skills associated with success in the global market (Novo and de la Torre 2010:8, 20). Competition and cultivating a competitive edge are both acknowledged and embraced. Colegio Menor encourages parents to begin preparing their children for success very early:

We started a playgroup area here at the Colegio that is below pre-kinder. So, as of three years old you can have a class here, which is a trend that is happening throughout the world – schooling is starting earlier and earlier. As of the age of three, we already have six groups of 17 kids in the playgroup area. It is pretty structured play. More and more, what ends up happening is that when we compare kids that want to come in at pre-kinder to the kids that are here at playgroup, the ones that are already starting schooling have a huge advantage over the other ones. Competition is starting earlier and earlier. And we have an immersion-in-English program that starts in pre-kinder classes – all classes are in English so they start hearing it all day for a year so obviously they have a big

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<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), it is likely that the university’s founders helped create and promote the movement of wealthy Ecuadorians into these suburban valley communities. According to several of my consultants, at least one of the university’s founders is responsible for acquiring land and developing highly coveted urbanizaciones in Cumbayá. In addition, the family’s historical distinction and well-known educational excellence encouraged elite families to send their children to the university before it was deemed a legal institution by the Ecuadorian government.

head start. Kids have a big advantage over kids who are just staying at home with the maids.

The administrators and owners of Colegio Menor recognize that diplomas from elite institutions lead to admission to elite universities where students acquire additional educational credentials. Individuals who possess these credentials accrue recognizable *advantages* in the competitive world of global capitalism in addition to the ones they already enjoy from being part of the exclusive and insular elite social circle. While the institutional doctrines of Colegio Menor and its sister institution, USFQ, publicly espouse principles associated with Liberal Arts education, their founders are committed to a business model of education that prepares students to excel in capitalist markets throughout the world and to serve as local examples of business acumen and strategic negotiation of political economic realities at home. Preparation in a competitive world is a popular theme. The founders of Colegio Menor are well-known in the country for their business acumen, and at the time of my research, their focus was on moving the colegio forward as a cutting-edge educational institution that is also a successful for-profit business. The school's general manager had recently successfully moved a family hacienda into a technologically advanced and computerized form of intensive agriculture based on close tracking of inputs and outputs supported by a more efficient labor force motivated by "incentives" for increased productivity. School leaders believed that a similar business approach could also be successfully applied in the educational setting. A high-level administrator explained the motivation and strategy:

My job here is to really represent the owners and to help in transition because our General Director is leaving. So I am trying to solve the big issues, help in the long-term planning in the school which was left to the side most of the time because people here are dealing with day to day preoccupations. My focus is on how to make this school a business because this school is a for-profit organization. Most schools are organizations that are not-for-profit, and most

employees are used to that type of environment so there is a lot of concept that we just have to spend our budget and this school doesn't have to make money. But it does have to make money because a bunch of people have invested a lot of money to build this thing and to make it happen so I have to actually make the school start paying them back.

My job is to oversee the budget, taking care of all of the administrative, restructure financing, talk to the banks. I want to make changes here, too. I want to implement incentives... What I really want is to start tracking anything – anything is better than nothing – but how are we doing? We have to find some type of measure to see how we are doing. Once you start tracking, people know what you are looking at and things start to work your way. I'm doing a lot of market research, too. We just did a survey to parents about what they like. What is their priority? Social class, etc.? Labor is so cheap here in Ecuador that we were able to do this huge survey with 200+ one-on-one interviews for like \$4000! It was crazy. I'm sure that social class will be shown to be a priority for parents.

The biggest challenge is managing the people. Like in any business, the biggest challenge is the people...making people be willing to change and be open to excelling. People go into academics because they love it, but they are not good administrators. There is a lot of work to do at this school, but this is a very high quality school. Teachers love it. We have some of the best resources for teachers. All of the administrators have education background except for me. I'm not just pushing the business side of things, but I think that we are actually a lot more competitive than the other schools because we are a business. The other schools are slow, they have committees to make decisions. Who is the decider here? I am.

The General Manager at Colegio Menor was educated in the United States and holds an advanced degree in business administration from an Ivy League university. Prior to focusing his attention on hacienda intensification and leading the colegio, he worked for two large multinational corporations in banking and marketing. He is well-versed in capitalist business practices that harness growing technological power to produce desirable products for the global market. Educational credentials are highly coveted products within advanced capitalism, and institutions like Colegio Menor seek to turn a profit while simultaneously creating demand for and limiting access to the products they offer. The quote above also makes it clear that the qualities of performance and attainment that will be “tracked” by the institution are as much

dependent on the results of social marketing efforts focusing on parents of prospective students and profit-making potential as educational attainment.

The allure of the United States was also an explicit topic of discussion with professors and administrators at USFQ who stated that the “official motivation” for structuring the university to mirror the liberal arts system in the states is that “the U.S. system represents the best system in the world.” Unofficially, consultants suggested there were more practical motivations that provide insights into the changing economic circumstances in which many traditional hacendado elite families find themselves. While my consultants agreed that the majority of the population in Ecuador still feel that “things” and “ideas” that originated in the United States (including educational systems) represent “the best the world has to offer,” they recounted that as the sucre (Ecuadorian currency) became more and more unstable, fewer elites were able to afford sending their children to the states for university. Manuel shared that it was quite common for traditional hacendado elites to send their children to university in the states during the petroleum boom in Ecuador. However, by the 1980s and 1990s the sucre was faring very badly in the currency market, and sending children off to university in the United States became more difficult to afford. USFQ was created during this period (1988) to capitalize on a growing demand for university education within Ecuador that emulated the quality available in the United States. Many Ecuadorians characterize the university as an elite institution with a student body of wealthy students. Regardless of the status of the student body’s bank account, it was rare to hear anyone, elite or otherwise, impugn the quality of the education offered at USFQ.

USFQ was the first private and completely self-financed university established in Ecuador. It has been a very successful and lucrative not-for-profit business. The university’s founders are extremely proud that the institution does not receive any funding from the



Ecuadorian government. This financial independence is considered critically important in the quest to maintain the educational field's relative autonomy from the field of government (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:177–78), which, according to one of USFQ's founders, had a long history of “highly politicizing” education in the country. The university has, from its beginning in 1988, emphasized the value of liberal arts education in the development of knowledge, individual liberties and the entrepreneurial spirit as a means for the development of Ecuadorian society. Free enterprise is also touted as a necessary vehicle for a better future in the country, thereby linking liberal arts education, elite notions of proper citizenship and free market capitalist development.

Indeed, the founders credit much of the University's success to their business prowess, skills inherited from their successful ancestors and honed through their immersion in the United States educational and political economic systems. Our discussions about USFQ's origins and success often overlapped with discussions about dollarization in Ecuador and how this process resulted in a more stable economy for much of the society (leading to more people being able to afford the private education offered at USFQ) while also “hurting” many elite families who could no longer take advantage of the drastic ups and downs of the Ecuadorian currency. One founder described how he also was able to take advantage of the changing status of the Ecuadorian sucre when establishing the university. He shared that he and USFQ's other founders were “speculators” who tried to determine in which direction the sucre would go in the world currency market. They made decisions about purchasing equipment, furniture and technology, as well as staff compensation, based on how the sucre was faring against the dollar. He concluded that this speculation eventually gave the university a great advantage in the marketplace, and by the time that Ecuador adopted the dollar as official currency, the university

was already on solid footing. Speculation resulted in advantages that were key to the university's initial success and enabled USFQ to stay ahead of its subsequent competitors. While the founders and leaders of elite educational institutions such as Colegio Americano, Colegio Menor and USFQ are clearly well-versed in important business knowledge and skills associated with achievement in advanced capitalism, these institutions are also successful and in demand because of their contributions to the reproduction of long-standing ideas of social distinction and status within the country and shared by elites across the globe.

As Pierre Bourdieu has noted (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu 2001), the educational system is a social field that the dominant class attempts to control for its own display of cultural power and social reproduction. It is through control of this institutional sphere that elites are able to accomplish their own intergenerational reproduction. This conservative function of elite educational institutions is quite evident in Ecuador where elites both openly and tacitly acknowledge education's importance in accruing valuable symbolic capital. In fact, a leader at Colegio Menor noted that this aspect is one central component of the overall business model that elite institutions adopt:

The Colegio Menor is an interesting case. This is a school that has success because of its academic model but really the social aspect is huge. Parents consider that as a very, very important factor when deciding where to place their kids. They want to place their kids in a school where they have friends that are from the right families and that is a very, very big reality here. Here we have mothers who complain about the kids that we admit. It is a very expensive school so there are a lot of families that can pay but when we accept their kids we have other parents who complain and say "why did you accept those kids – estos largos que tienen plata!" Oh yeah, there is a lot of that!

Jennifer: How do you respond to that?

The woman who is in charge of admissions is from a very good family. She is quite fair-skinned with blond hair but her kids are a little darker and she says, "look, my kids aren't fair-skinned or anything and they are here." But we do have to take care in admissions because the reality is that this is a business and it is

held together by some of that. So, if we were to not be selective and accept everybody who could pay, I think the school would eventually collapse.

Dominance in the realm of education benefits social and economic elites by instilling in them the qualities and competences required for successful maneuver in the global economy (i.e., cultural knowledge, business practices and political economic strategies), qualities to which they have been exposed over multiple generations due to their long history of resource domination in the country. There is a positive feedback loop at work when it comes to the reproduction of social inequities through education in Ecuador. Elites send their children to schools like Colegio Americano, Colegio Menor and USFQ not only because of the competencies they will acquire but also because of the people with whom they will interact.<sup>44</sup> They are attracted to these institutions because of the social reputations of their founders and concerned that the student body continue to reflect those social distinctions. In the case of USFQ, its founders' prestige was a clear driver in its initial success. Private universities were not legal in Ecuador at the time, and therefore, the school was not legal or accredited for the first eight years of its existence. And yet, elites sent their children to be educated there based on the name recognition and reputation of at least one of the founders. My consultants described the decision to attend the university as a "leap of faith" that finally forced the government to legalize private universities, as USFQ was producing so many well-respected graduates who were "receiving all of the important jobs in the country." Ecuadorian elites take great care to send their children to schools with the children of other economic and social elites. This not only results in the transmission of competencies related to the realm of "legitimate culture," but also contributes to life-long alliances with the

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<sup>44</sup> I focus here on data provided by my research consultants. However, other researchers have reported similar findings related to the reproduction of Ecuadorian social hierarchy in the realm of education. For additional information, see (Andrés 2008; Johnson 2011; Novo and de la Torre 2010; Roitman 2009).

country's future power brokers. As I described in Chapter Three, families also cultivate such alliances through intermarriage and shared life cycle events.

If the promise of social mobility through education is a cornerstone of the ideology of mestizaje and Ecuadorian elites regularly comment of the importance of education for the country's progress and development, one might expect that the student body at Quito's top educational institutions would reflect a diversity of cultural heritages and economic attainment. For the most part, this is not the case. Rather, very little ethnic and economic diversity exists, especially within elite colegios. I asked one of the leaders of Colegio Menor and USFQ if he remembered socializing with indigenous people or having indigenous friends when he was growing up and he responded:

No. No it was quite marked. We had friends, you know, we used to play with the indigenous kids who were on our [family] farms. But as far as going to school with them, no. And you still don't see indigenous people in school. You see them more, especially here at the University (USFQ). But in private colegios, no you don't see them.

I received similar responses when I asked another consultant if "mestizo children" attend Colegio Menor:

We do have some but not much. I mean, who knows, but in terms of the actual color of their skin, we do have a couple, maybe 15 percent? We are like 1,400 students. You have La Sociedad – within that is the high society that is a smaller proportion. These are the really, really good families. Then you have a broader group that are from okay types of families but they are still accepted and then an even broader group that just have money but not from great families. At the colegio we have a mix of these with most from the first two groups.

Traditional hacendado elites do not have the expectation that their children will interact with children from other ethnicities or socioeconomic backgrounds when they attend elite institutions. Instead, my consultants' comments suggest that they prefer that school classrooms

organize around the same insular social group with whom they interact in daily life. This came across clearly in discussions about “scholarship students” at elite colegios. Many consultants described that their colegios offered scholarships to promising students who could not afford the high tuition at the elite institutions. These “*becados*” (scholarship students) were heavily marked as “outsiders” and marginalized by the elite student body. According to my consultants, “*becarios*” (scholarship-holders) always remained outside of the “best group.” A high-ranking administrator at Colegio Menor was quite forthcoming about the social dilemmas that have forced the school to reconsider providing scholarships to “less privileged kids”:

We had times when we gave scholarships to less privileged kids and it was very, very tough. We thought we were doing something good. We tried to give these high school kids a better academic opportunity but they ended up being very much segregated socially from the non-scholarship students. It was very tough for the kids. Now we are reconsidering whether we want to do it again – we are trying to determine if the increased opportunities they may get academically like going to a good college outweigh the problems they have socially going through those four years of high school that are critical to their formation. Some did well, some were very adaptable socially and learned what was required to fit in - one or two of them - and they did well and made friends. But there were complaints from parents when we let in the scholarship kids. And at graduation there were parents who didn’t want the scholarship kids at their table – it is tough.

Thea Johnson (2011:47–48) reported that the one indigenous student attending Colegio Americano while Johnson was a teacher there experienced similar social marginalization. Consistent with my own research data, Johnson also reported that there was not a single Afro-Ecuadorian student enrolled at the colegio during her tenure there as a teacher. These findings suggest that highly coveted educational credentials and skills respected within the global economy are mostly within the reach of elite children whose families have inculcated Western values and cultural ideals associated with modernity through the enjoyment of multiple generations of privilege linked to the colonial past.

My consultants' comments and reports from other researchers in Ecuador (Andrés 2008; Johnson 2011; Novo and de la Torre 2010; Roitman 2009) reveal that despite attending schools that espouse progressive ideas related to democracy, individual achievement and equal opportunity, elite children – including those among the traditional hacendado faction of elites – rarely witness these principles in action beyond the confines of their insular social milieu. These elite children's main interactions with people from different social and ethnic backgrounds do not take place in contexts of equality such as within elite schools or in shared social spaces like gated urbanizaciones, restaurants or exclusive social clubs. Instead, people from other social and ethnic backgrounds continue to be associated with subordinated positions in society, thereby reaffirming beliefs about white elite superiority that harken back to the colonial period.

How are we to reconcile nationalist mestizaje rhetoric that ties upward mobility to education in Ecuador and a system of elite education that, by all appearances, remains out of reach for most non-elites,<sup>45</sup> regardless of their ability to pay the high tuition or their educational promise? Pierre Bourdieu's work emphasized that social classes, especially the ruling and intellectual classes, preserve their social privileges across generations despite the myth that contemporary post-industrial society offers equality of opportunity and high social mobility that can be achieved through formal education. Bourdieu reported that schools accomplish this first and foremost by offering socialization into a particular “cultural tradition” in addition to transmitting technical knowledge and skills. Elite educational institutions reinforce elite ideals and values, effectively reproducing existing social class relations, reinforcing an unequal

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<sup>45</sup> It is notable that the private Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) proudly provides scholarships to indigenous students so that they have opportunities to attain the educational credentials and cultivate the important social networks that have been available to elite students. It is also important to note that these and other scholarship students help create the appearance of educational objectivity whereby credentials are conferred from a meritocratic system based on democratic ideals, rather than reveal that most admission decisions support the reproduction of an unequal system based on racial and class distinctions (Sullivan 2002:146).

distribution of elite cultural capital and legitimating the elite (Western) values and ideals that it transmits to students (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:177–219; Swartz 1997:190–191). Traditional hacendado elites definitely espouse the promise of social mobility and developmental progress through education. They believe that an educated populace is the key to progress and development in the country. But they also insist that there are limits to the upward mobility that is available to non-elites, even those who have attained educational credentials. I came to understand that while education may be the medicine that Ecuador needs to cure “underdevelopment” and some upward mobility may be possible, there is a social boundary that is very difficult to cross, the borders of which are marked by intrinsic elite qualities (incorporated cultural capital) that cannot be acquired in the classroom:

Remember, education is something that comes in school, it is something that we see and provide here. We can do everything and try really hard, but we can’t give the kids the stuff that they get at home. I mean, slowly you will get there but you can have somebody who has a different culture, a different upbringing, someone who completes our educational process but they are not “*educado*.” “Educado” doesn’t mean your titles or all of the degrees you have. Well, “education” is part of “*educación*” but not all of it. (Administrator at an elite colegio)

At the same time that private elite educational institutions use the growing economic power of other social groups in Ecuador to sell access to credentials, they also symbolically impose the limits of social mobility by reifying notions of traditional hacendado elite superiority based on their essential social whiteness, or *educación*, which is a product of their Spanish heritage and multigenerational connections to modernity. Educational credentials are valuable in Ecuadorian society, but it is the possession of other forms of cultural capital that bestows the distinction of true elite status.

## The Myth of Mestizaje and the Enduring Values of Social Whiteness

Mestizaje is a complicated concept for my traditional hacendado elite consultants. They discussed mestizaje with me in purely abstract terms, almost as though they were reciting passages from a textbook. Most did not demonstrate any personal attachment or relationship to the mechanics and goals of mestizaje. In fact, while mestizaje is a central concept in Ecuadorian nation-building ideology, scholars at USFQ explicitly cautioned me about using the term “mestizo” in discussions about elites and social relations in the country. Fernando asserted that “mestizo” is a Western academic classification, rather than an emic category in Ecuador. He explained that people in Ecuador use the term “cholo” much more often than “mestizo.” When I reminded Fernando that he and other consultants expressed that “cholo” has a negative connotation in the country, he conceded the point but emphasized that it is often used within families in a “more playful way.”<sup>46</sup> Norman Whitten (2003b:56) has written that “Mestizaje is a projection of mixture ‘downward’ from those who stand atop the class and ethnic pyramid. To move ‘upward’ in wealth, power, or prestige is to engage in a process of *blanqueamiento*.” Whitten’s point is that Ecuadorian elites don’t actively participate in the “mixing” and social mobility implied in the nationalist rhetoric of *el mestizaje*. *El mestizaje* is a process that applies to other Ecuadorians who seek to improve their socioeconomic standing by adopting social and cultural traits associated with “white” elites.<sup>47</sup> And while the discourse of mestizaje asserts that all Ecuadorians are of mixed European and indigenous descent and therefore mestizo, most of

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<sup>46</sup> Norman Whitten (Whitten 2003b:70) has also noted this phenomenon within families. Whitten suggests that terms like “cholo,” “longo” and “chagra” are deployed within families to remind members how far ahead or behind they are in *blanqueamiento* (social and cultural whitening) efforts. My own data support this conclusion.

<sup>47</sup> This has been discussed by many scholars of Ecuador and Andean South America including Cervone 2010; Cervone and Rivera 1999; de la Cadena 2000; de la Cadena 2001; de la Cadena 2005; de la Cadena 1998; Rahier 1998; Whitten and Torres 1998; Roitman 2009; Roitman 2008; Weismantel and Eisenman 1998; Weismantel 2001; Stutzman 1981; Whitten 2003b; de la Torre 1999; de la Torre 2000; Whitten, Whitten, and Chango 1997.



my consultants disagree. Consider the following exchange that I had with Modesto at his office one evening as the janitorial staff cleaned right outside of his office door:

Jennifer: So, what would you consider yourself, in terms of “race”?

Modesto: That is a very good question but a difficult one to answer. *[Modesto stands and quietly shuts the door to his office, closing out the janitorial staff who had been working and possibly listening to us converse for the last hour.]* I am skeptical when people say that we all must be mixed somehow – you know, mestizo. And the people around them think, “Of course *you* say that because you *are* mestizo and that is why you say that.” If they weren’t, then they wouldn’t say that everybody is, you know?

I’ll return to my consultants’ views about their own racial and ethnic identity shortly, but for now I want to emphasize that they understand “el mestizaje” as something that others strive for in their efforts to advance socially and economically and creep closer to the upper portions of the pyramid of Ecuadorian elite power. Accumulating economic capital and institutionalized cultural capital in the form of educational credentials may assist their climb, but ultimately they will likely find the ascent stymied by their lack of intrinsic qualities that signal their educación through the possession of la cultura. From the perspective of elites in Ecuador, social mobility halts at the middle class. Elites, who embody the best that Western civilization has to offer, patrol the borders of mestizaje to ensure that the social advancement of others does not threaten their own privileged positions in the social hierarchy, which have been meticulously reproduced since the colonial period.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, my traditional hacendado elite consultants have very specific criteria for acceptable marriage partners and these are not supportive of biological

mixing with individuals from other racial or ethnic groups in Ecuador.<sup>48</sup> Nor do they adopt or promote the continuation of indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian sociocultural traits and practices. The expectation is that the majority population will emulate elite styles of life, ideals and values so that the country will progress toward a social reality closer to the United States and Western Europe. Traditional hacendado elites don't assimilate into popular cultural forms, which are generally reviled due to their vulgarity and even danger. Most of my consultants could not imagine why I chose to participate in festivals, public events or even use public transportation. They were convinced that I would be the victim of violence during festivals and worried that my gringa constitution would not hold up against certain Ecuadorian delicacies like cuy. These expressions and attitudes underscored my consultants' ongoing commitment to ideology that actually underscores their separation from the majority population due to intrinsic differences that link elites to "civilization" and "whiteness" through both "la cultura" and biology. My consultants accept the underlying logic of blanqueamiento and its important relationship to Ecuadorian mestizaje in much the same way that their ancestors embraced and cultivated the conceptions of "degrees of whiteness" that structured colonial Ecuador's Sociedad de Castas (see Chapter One).

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<sup>48</sup> This was a touchy and uncomfortable topic of conversation for many of my consultants. Some individuals were very direct with me, expressing disdain and mild horror about the idea of intimacy and marriage with indigenous men and women. María, a consultant in her early 30s, was so taken aback by news that a mutual friend was involved in a love affair with an Otavaleño that she had to excuse herself from the table in order to collect herself. Other times, my consultants' opinions about biological hybridity emerged during discussions about topics I initially considered completely unrelated. For example, one afternoon I found myself in a multi-hour conversation with Francisco about the intensification of dairy farming on some haciendas. As I struggled to maintain focus during explanations of bacteria, pasteurization, vaccinations and milk production, Francisco began talking about the pros and cons of mixing different breeds of cows "to make them stronger." He offered the following comments to help me understand the concept: "This is like mixing a white person and a black person to make a mulatto, who is said to be much more robust. Pure-bred animals are not as strong as mixed animals. It is funny, the people who sell the cows to me say, 'think about white person producing with a black person and making a mulatto – you know it's very strong.' And it is true, it is a reality that mixing breeds makes the young stronger. The mix may not be as beautiful as purebred Holsteins, but they are strong, they produce milk and they pay the bills."

## Traditional Hacendado Elite Identities, Blanqueamiento and Mestizaje

*After conducting genealogical research at Teresa's house one evening, a man who had also been searching for information about his own family genealogy offered me a ride back to my apartment, noting that riding alone in taxis at night was very dangerous for gringas. Riding back to my apartment, we chatted about social relations in Ecuador. I noted that throughout our conversation this gentleman consistently used the word "indio" to refer to indigenous people. He spoke about racism between "blancos" and "indios" and described that this racism was still bad, even though "indios" have been integrated into society a great deal more than ever before.*

*I decided to ask him about "mestizos." He became even more animated and replied that "this is the worst problem we have in Ecuador today." He asserted that there are "un montón de gente" in Ecuador who are mixed but they don't know where to place themselves – "blanco" or "indio"? The lawyer went on to explain that "mestizos with some money hate 'blancos' and treat 'indios' worse than blancos ever treated them." He said that mestizos treat their empleados terribly – the same people who care for their homes and for their children. The lawyer concluded that this "troubled relationship" is nearly impossible to "manejar" (manage). He declared that this is the age of classism in Ecuador with abundant "class wars" ("imaginarse!") because the government is trying to divide the classes and make things more tense between them. (Field Notes, March 2007)*

Race thinking is evident in traditional hacendado elite considerations of mestizaje and the place of mestizos in Ecuadorian society. Despite the extensive social changes that have occurred with the rise of the indigenous movement in Ecuador and the prominent discourse of a pluricultural national body that is blending through el mestizaje, my traditional hacendado elites still view Ecuadorian social organization in terms of a very few categories of people – blanco (or español), mestizo, indigenous (or indio), and (sometimes) negro. Membership in each of these groups is defined in terms of an individual's degree of whiteness, the definition of which is not always easy to discern. For my consultants, and potentially other Ecuadorians, the mestizo category is even more perplexing today than it was during the colonial period because now they must find new ways to "manejar" rising mestizos without appearing to deride the notion of el mestizaje and its attendant promise of social mobility. As this section's opening passage and

Modesto's comments in the previous section suggest, my consultants invariably sought to distance themselves from the category of mestizo by way of intrinsic and essential behavioral qualities that they link to biological and social whiteness.

This is a tricky balance that traditional hacendado elites strive to achieve, reinforcing their own superior and inherent difference from mestizos, indigenous people and Afro-Ecuadorians without denigrating the very process of “whitening” in the population they have advocated for generations. Discussions with my consultants about the 2001 Ecuadorian Census demonstrated the complexities and relational nature of individual identity classifications. As other scholars have noted with regard to Ecuador (Clark 1998; Roitman 2009; Roitman 2008; Stutzman 1981), collecting census information about race and ethnicity in Ecuador can be complicated by interviewer and interviewee ideas about social hierarchy and the “natural order” of social relations in the country. The 2001 census in Ecuador asked respondents to report their ethnicity according to six predefined categories: Indigenous, Black, Mestizo, Mulatto, White and Other.<sup>49</sup> Some of my consultants – especially my younger consultants who have been thoroughly indoctrinated into discourse about the nation's blended bodies – reported that census workers (who these same consultants described as unequivocally “mestizo”) argued with them when they answered “mestizo/a” to the question about their own ethnicity. For example, Valeria described that she responded to the census worker's question about her ethnicity by simply stating “Soy mestiza.” But the census worker refused to accept this answer. An argument ensued wherein the census representative tried to convince Valeria that she is “blanquita” and “demanded” to know why Valeria did not want to be considered “blanca.” Valeria reported that

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<sup>49</sup> The 2010 Census expanded on these categories by asking respondents to indicate how they identify themselves according to their culture and customs. The categories offered included indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian or Afro-descendant, black, mulatto, Montubio, mestizo, white and other. Respondents who answered “indigenous” were then queried about their nationality and asked to choose among a list of specific nationalities.

she had no idea what the census worker ended up recording because they never resolved the argument. When I pressed Valeria about why the census worker might have been so adamant to classify Valeria as “blanca,” she offered that this was due to her “class” rather than denoting anything racial. She went on to assert that “blanqueamiento” in Ecuador has more to do with economics and cultural customs than race.

Many of my consultants described dissonance between their answers about ethnicity and their empleados’ responses to the same question. These moments of dissonance shed light on Ecuadorian ideas about “social whitening” that underlie mestizaje discourse and practice. Mónica reported that there is pressure to identify as “mestizo” in the census because of discord between social groups in the country. She reported that many of the indigenous people who work in her family’s Quito homes consider themselves “blancos.” Mónica explained that during the 2001 census she answered the census worker’s question about ethnicity by saying that she is “mestiza” because everyone in Ecuador has a “mezcla” of “sangre.” Mónica went on to describe that one of her indigenous “empleadas” who came to work for the family in Quito instead of working on one of their haciendas responded to the census worker’s question about her ethnicity by saying that she is “blanca.” Mónica concluded that this reflected the indigenous custom of referring to indigenous people who are rising economically and socially (i.e., by living in the city versus in el campo) as “blanco.” According to Mónica and other consultants, these indigenous individuals look down on other indigenous people in rural areas who still farm and lead rural lives. The definition of “whiteness” in Ecuador signals more than “sangre.” The assertion of one’s whiteness (or lack of mestizo-ness) is bound up in relations of power that are under constant negotiation.

So, do my traditional hacendado elite consultants consider themselves to be “mestizo” as these discussions about the 2001 census may suggest? Mostly, the answer is no. But for embattled traditional hacendado elites, asserting their whiteness in certain contexts can be risky, may draw unwanted attention and even possibly give the impression that they need to prove their previously taken-for-granted status and privilege. Such assertions might also belie their possession of educación, embodied qualities of distinction that no amount of money can buy. Their possession of educación, as well as their access to elite education, is derived from their European cultural and ancestral heritage and all of its accompanying privileges. Perhaps that is the reason why, when pressed about their “race,” so many of my consultants reported that they are “español.” I was very interested in this category since it has a long and sordid history in Ecuador’s structural relations of domination so I urged Modesto to tell me more about it:

Jennifer: Do people in Ecuador use the term “blanco” or is it more common to hear “español” in discussions about race?

Modesto: No, español isn’t really used to describe race. I mean there isn’t really a concept of... Well, I guess it is blanco. I mean, you have indio, mestizo and ... I guess it is blanco. But you really don’t say that to people. If somebody asked me what race I am, I’d be a little bit uncomfortable and afraid to say “blanco” because how stuck up it sounds. But “mestizo” – I’m not mestizo either because mestizo is...mestizo is a mix. I think the perception is that people believe – and want to believe – that they are pure-bred Spaniards.

I want to point out here that my very act of questioning Modesto and others about “race” was considered tasteless and revealed my gringa lack of educación. While I was often given a “pass” for my transgressions of elite standards of etiquette, discussions about race pushed some of my consultants to the limits of their generosity and in some cases cost me the opportunity for follow-up conversations. However, Modesto was always incredibly gracious and seemed to enjoy the intellectual component of these discussions. Regarding the question of race in Ecuador, he

offered the following perspective that demonstrates how intertwined race, culture and blanqueamiento are in Ecuador:

There is the racial part of it that is still existent. Race is a big issue and is very much related to class – they go hand in hand. That is why people talk about class because they can talk about race without addressing it directly. In the end, the race issue is not a big deal in my family in terms of respect, etcetera. Race becomes an issue again if you want to marry somebody. It is big issue if you want to marry an indigenous person – a BIG family issue! First, there is the reality of the cultural differences. I mean, we live in the same country, we live in the same cities but we are culturally very, very different. It is very different. It is not even the same. Just the way you live, the way you raise your children – it is very different. And over time, families have made a big effort to maintain their culture. For example, how indigenous people treat their women – there is a lot of violence against women and children. That is part of the fear. For example, you have a male Otavaleño who marries a white woman, at first they are in love and everything is great. Then they have kids and the father thinks he has to beat the children to make them understand. I mean this is a generalization because I am sure that there are a lot of people who have changed and don't...but this is the perception.

To be “indigenous” is to be categorically different than “blancos” or “Españoles” in terms of culture and temperament. Among other qualities, my consultants emphasized that indigenous people are “ignorant,” “chronic liars,” “lazy” and “unclean,” while also vehemently asserting that Ecuador does not “have racism” like the United States with “Blacks.” My consultant José summed it up with a single blunt statement: “People in Ecuador don’t hate indigenous people. The problem in Ecuador is profound ignorance and a lack of educación among indigenous people.”

### The Culture of Social Whiteness

While the jury may still be out on the question of how much mixing of blood has occurred between traditional hacendado elites and non-elite Ecuadorians, many continue to point to essential qualities of comportment that mark off the boundaries between themselves and

“others,” including mestizos who possess valuable institutionalized cultural capital and increasing economic fortunes. Similar to social relations during previous periods, traditional hacendado elites consider some mestizos better than others and invariably “better” means “less indigenous.” But as it turns out, indigenous people are not the only Ecuadorians who lack educación. This quality also applies to “mestizos” who are not considered members of elite social circles. Rather than refer to these individuals as “mestizo,” the same term that some used to describe their own ethnic identity to census workers, non-elites who enjoy social mobility in terms of educational credentials and economic advancement are usually referred to as “cholo” or “longo.” As I described previously, neither are terms of endearment, and “longo” is unambiguous in its derogatory intent.<sup>50</sup> Rather, they act as signposts delimiting the boundaries of mestizaje (Roitman 2009; 2008; Johnson 2011). Mestizaje terminates at the middle class because cholos and longos will never possess “la cultura,” which includes the qualitative characteristics of image and manners contained within educación and the credentials associated with education. My consultants and other elites in Ecuador want other people to cultivate these intrinsic qualities, but the true embodiment of these characteristics is something only elites are able to possess because they are born with it.

In terms of the aesthetics of elite whiteness, people must possess the “right look” if they want to be accepted as white or white-mestizo. As Roitman (2008:12) pointed out, a person can be “preparado” (prepared in terms of educational credentials and comportment) and still be shut

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<sup>50</sup> One of my consultants who is from a prominent family in Southern Ecuador, Alejandra, discussed how the term “longo” is used by elites in Ecuador. Alejandra described that use of the term is a grave insult in the higher levels of society. It is a serious insult to call someone a “longo.” However, according to Alejandra, use of the term “longo” is much more common among “*las clases bajas*” who “accept” their position and don’t take offense to being called “longo.” Additionally, Sebastián and Fernando reported that “longo” is always pejorative, much like the terms “indio” and “indio de la mierda,” all of which they reported in regular use within the social circles of the upper classes in Quito. Regarding the term “longo,” they explained that people say “longo” to reference a person with a “bad attitude” – persons who want to “climb the social ladder but lack the cultural background.”



out from jobs or other opportunities. One of my consultants, Patricio, provided a lens onto how this might happen during a summer field research visit in 2004. Patricio discussing with me the trouble he was having locating reliable “greeters” to work in a boutique that was attached to a new, upscale restaurant in Quito. I was aghast to learn that he was offering to pay these women more than four times the salary being paid to the indigenous and mestizo women working at the front desk of my hotel. Patricio patiently explained that unlike the indigenous-owned hotel where I was staying, the job at the boutique requires a “certain type of person with a certain type of presentation” who would make the wealthy (white) women comfortable while shopping there.

What constitutes “the right look” was somewhat difficult to nail down with my consultants. It certainly extends beyond phenotype, as the gradient of skin colors vary greatly even within elite social circles. However, when describing “cholos” and especially “longos” to me, my consultants usually referred to dark skin and small stature, as well as straight, coarse hair. But categorizing individuals based on these sorts of characteristics in Ecuador (and throughout the Andean region of South America) can be tricky. I witnessed this first hand during a *despedida* (going away party) that Angelina’s family held for me. The plan at this event was for me to stay up all night due to the party and my travel schedule, so Angelina encouraged me to invite a couple of girlfriends who could stay up with me, along with her younger family members. As a result, Alejandra (who I had grown quite close to over the course of several years) and Jules, a close friend of mine from graduate school in the United States, accompanied me. Alejandra had moved to Quito from a city in Southern Ecuador to attend university. Her family is quite prominent in her home city, and her ancestors are solidly Spanish. Physically, Alejandra boasts ivory skin with olive undertones, straight and coarse jet black hair and a very petite frame. Alejandra speaks perfect English, and, at least from my perspective, she seems to

exude educación. By contrast, physically Jules is a stereotypical vision of gringanness. She stands nearly six feet tall with a slender build, long, wavy blond hair and blue eyes. However, unlike most gringas in Ecuador, Jules is wholly fluent in Spanish, including the many colloquial phrases and slang that distinguish Quiteños. Like Alejandra, Jules is comfortable within Ecuadorian elite social circles, partly as a result of her upbringing in the southern culture of the United States and her longtime association with upper middle class and upper class Ecuadorians.

I was convinced that Angelina, a somewhat conservative woman within the traditional hacendado elite social circle, would be pleased by my choice to invite both Alejandra and Jules to spend the night in her family home. So it was a great surprise and disappointment to witness Angelina's disparate treatment of my friends that night. As far as Angelina was concerned, Jules walked on water. She was the perfect addition to the party – incredibly lovely in her physical attributes, intelligence, presentation and charm. Angelina could not get enough of Jules and spent a great part of the evening asking her questions about herself, her family and her plans in Ecuador. She also made a point to tell Jules that she was welcome in the home any time she liked. Several years have passed since that despedida, but Angelina still makes a point to ask about Jules every time we talk by telephone.

Taken on its own, Angelina's behavior toward Jules was not at all surprising. I have always known her to be incredibly gracious, welcoming and generous, which made her behavior toward Alejandra all the more perplexing to watch and understand. From the moment Alejandra arrived and was introduced to the family, Angelina was cold and dismissive. She made no attempt to get to know Alejandra and seemed to expend an enormous amount of energy avoiding looking at Alejandra at all. Occasionally, Angelina would interrupt a conversation between me and Alejandra by placing herself between us with her back to Alejandra and act as though she

was neither talking nor there. Angelina rebuffed all of Alejandra's attempts at conversation. Furiously trying to figure out what was transpiring in front of my eyes, it occurred to me that Angelina was acting toward Alejandra in the same manner that she behaved whenever I spent time speaking with her empleadas or when she was forced to go to the open air markets without her chauffeur or another empleada. Her strategic exclusions (Brownrigg 1972:147) were intended to send a message to Alejandra that she was "out of place" and an interloper in the Quiteño elite social circle.<sup>51</sup> I was mortified that I had invited Alejandra to a party where she was treated so badly and spent most of the evening finding ways for us to be as far away from Angelina as possible. Alejandra talked to me about the experience upon my return to Quito and described that it was not the first occasion that she has been treated poorly by elites in Quito. Alejandra explained that she often relies on her Quiteño relatives to ease her entry into these insular social circles. I failed Alejandra that evening because I did not lay the groundwork for her entrance into Angelina's world by providing context about her family, background and experiences. Lacking contextual information that could anchor Alejandra and mark her as an "insider," Angelina likely based her impression on Alejandra's physical features and her ambiguous last name.<sup>52</sup> After all, as a "*gringita*" I was prone to form attachments with all sorts of people, even

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<sup>51</sup> My consultants want people to understand that if you are not one of us, you are invisible to us. Despite their preoccupations with "proper comportment" and honorable behavior, they intentionally act to remind outsiders of their status (or lack thereof) by underscoring their outsider state through "strategic exclusions" (Brownrigg 1972:147). Because of my own liminal status within this social group, I was the target of these uncomfortable but highly effective behaviors on more than one occasion and witnessed it directed to other people on many more occasions. In my experiences, parties were incredibly stress-inducing because I never fully understood where I stood in the immediate social hierarchy. I never attended any party unless the host or a close relative of the host invited me. Naively, I assumed that this precaution would translate into acceptance by party guests and hosts. However, as Valeria had tried to explain to me in the conversation that opened Chapter Three, parties and party invitations serve many purposes. The fact that one person thought I was worthy of an invitation did not in any way signal full acceptance by the larger social group. My field notes from these experiences are full of drama, angst and utter confusion about behaviors that appeared to completely contradict all of the rules of comportment that my consultants espoused during "formal" interview sessions.

<sup>52</sup> Alejandra's last name is a prominent apellido that has also proliferated outside of elite lineages. I discuss this phenomenon in Chapter Three.

indigenous people and “longos” (one of Angelina’s favorite words to describe “social climbers”). As an outsider myself, this was quite a learning moment for me.

Physical characteristics can be unreliable indicators of a person’s social status in Ecuador. But traditional hacendado elites assess an individual’s status by evaluating whether or not and to what degree they possess qualities associated with educación or “la cultura.” These are qualities associated with etiquette, manners and comportment demonstrate “good breeding.” According to mestizaje discourse, the possession of these qualities will lead to social mobility through the process of blanqueamiento. Consultants confirmed that advantages in Ecuadorian society accrue from one’s possession of “la cultura” rather than simply from having money and wealth. Consultants at an elite university also described that membership in the elite classes is signaled by the possession of “la cultura,” which sets people apart from the rest of the population. When I asked them to describe the contents of “la cultura,” they confirmed that it includes specific standards of manners and tastes (educación – in the sense of Bourdieu’s incorporated cultural capital), education (in terms of study – institutionalized cultural capital), knowledge, dress and language. These things together comprise “*la cultura general*.” They contrasted this with “chagra” (tacky), which can be applied to non-elites and also the “new rich” (nouveau riche or nuevo rico). Consultants consistently remarked that “nuevos ricos” (especially in the southern portion of Quito) lack taste, build tacky homes, are ostentatious and just want to “show themselves.” Quite simply, nuevos ricos lack class, and they are not educado.

The importance of educación appears to be officially recognized at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito where all new students were required to attend a course of “gastronomy” during which they were introduced to new foods and taught how to eat correctly utilizing the proper forms of etiquette. One of the university’s founders relayed that part of the culture is

often particularly difficult for gringos, who he reported are completely lacking in “la cultura.” (Ouch.) The elite private Colegio Menor described earlier in this chapter also recognizes the importance of educación in their curriculum. The institution reminds children from a very young age that “Good Manners Matter,” with the message displayed prominently in the classroom and within the school’s promotional material (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: The Importance of Etiquette, Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito

The examples presented above from educational institutions are a reminder that while the characteristics associated with educación and “la cultura” are considered intrinsic qualities that elites are born with, mestizaje promises that they can also be acquired to some degree. My consultant, Lorena, discussed this process as we traveled back to Quito after attending a baby shower in one of the suburban valley gated communities. Lorena described that people in the

south of Quito living near the shopping mall “El Recreo”<sup>53</sup> have a lot of money from businesses they have started. While they may have economic capital, Lorena bemoaned that they “haven’t learned to live like us yet.” I asked Lorena to explain what that meant, and she responded that they haven’t learned how to eat properly (i.e., table manners) and they don’t eat in fancy restaurants or shop for food in grocery stores like Supermaxi, preferring instead to visit unclean open-air markets and dirty food stands in the streets. They don’t partake in customary practices like baby showers either. (I certainly noted that the majority of people in Quito outside of the traditional hacendado elite social circle who I queried about appropriate gifts for such events responded with either blank stares or questions about what a “baby shower” actually is.) Importantly, Lorena emphasized that this lack that she perceived in the people living in the southern portion of Quito could be corrected through education about the proper way to “live like us [elites].” I saw this sentiment expressed in other venues too, especially in the advertisements in glossy magazines like *Vistazo* and *Cosas* as well as in “lessons” provided on products offered in the large grocery stores, similar to the series of “Tips de Etiqueta” offered on packages of napkins and depicted in Figure 5.

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<sup>53</sup> My consultants repeatedly mentioned this area as an example where social climber “cholos” and “longos” live and work. Many consultants expressed the belief that the people in that area of Quito who have increasing wealth are “corrupt,” “lack honor” and engage in illegal activities to earn money.



Figure 5: Etiquette Tips for Setting a Proper Table

While mestizaje would have us believe that there is no limit to the social mobility that can be achieved through the process of blanqueamiento, educación serves as a fortified boundary delimiting the space of elite – and especially traditional hacendado elite – status in Quito. Administrators at elite educational institutions conceded that “sometimes people from poor backgrounds are somehow raised with “la cultura” and end up having “educación,” which leads to them being somewhat accepted by the upper classes.” However, they noted that these are actually the exceptions that prove the rule, so to speak, as money and credentials don’t necessarily lead to acceptance in elite social circles or equal access to the resources and privileges that elites enjoy. Recall the comment above from an administrator of an elite colegio in the suburbs of Quito who admitted that “...education is something that comes in school, it is something that we see and provide here. We can do everything and try really hard, but we can’t give the kids the stuff that they get at home.” Being “educado” and possessing “la cultura” are intrinsic qualities that emerge from birth and are nurtured in the home rather than learned in a

classroom. Educación is the true conveyor of traditional hacendado elite distinction, and the good breeding that it signals legitimizes my consultants' status. Possessing educación also entails embodying elite notions about "honor" and "values" that guide proper forms of comportment and distinguish traditional hacendado elites from the "vulgar" emerging class of newly wealthy Ecuadorians whose rise poses a potential threat to their historical positions of privilege.

### The Dishonor of Los Nuevos Ricos

*"The social classes used to be clearly marked. There were the elite and the lower class – the pobres – who were usually indigenous. Things have started to change now. Now there is a middle class that is well educated and has money. These people have positions in the state, the government and the ministerios. This group is muy peligroso because the people in it are a mix of indio and gente bien, but more indio than gente bien. Indios are used to being dominated and they have a lot of uncontrolled anger. These new people in the middle class are muy poderoso but without the apellidos or values of gente bien. They have money but lack la cultura."*

*"Separada en educación más que nada. Y no es educación de los libros. Otra señal, que diferenciaba mucho a la gente que hacía que la sociedad sea más alta o más baja, dependía mucho del trato social en la vida, mejores costumbres, que se vistan mejor, que sean más limpios, nada más."*

*"No es confuso, es más bien de comprender muy fácilmente, porque una cosa es la educación de un libro y otra cosa es la educación en el trato personal. Una persona puede tener muchos libros y estar con la camisa sucia, y este no será nunca de la clase alta."*

*"Mestizos are ignorant people without values."*

My consultants did not think highly of the newly wealthy individuals in Quito, especially those who hail from El Sur (southern Quito). Comments like those above were common in



private conversations with consultants of all ages. It was also telling that my consultants made a point to differentiate between “nuevos ricos” and the “new elite,” which includes prominent families like the owners of the Supermaxi grocery chain who are well-respected but do not claim ties to nobility or other historically important families. Los nuevos ricos represent a liminal group of wealthy Quiteños who many of my consultants largely distrust and hold in contempt because they lack proper “values” and “goals.” They are wealthy people who do not appear to aspire to the goals of blanqueamiento and its implicit judgments about what constitutes the realm of legitimate culture in Ecuador. In other words, this population of newly wealthy Quiteños represents a threat to the very notions of value and worth that define elite status and have undergirded elite access to political, economic and symbolic power since the colonial period.

Traditional hacendado elites employ many tactics to guard against the incursion of nuevos ricos into their circles of power and distinction, including stringent norms related to endogamy and shared ideas about acceptable marriage partners, attendance at private and exclusive educational institutions and closed social activities that mark off milestone life events while also reinforcing insular social networks. They also use the power of symbolic categories like “honor” to set themselves apart from “dangerous” nuevos ricos. Being “educado” and possessing “la cultura” entails more than Western-oriented patterns of consumption and lifestyle. Most importantly, according to my consultants, educación points to manners of behavior and the possession of “valores” (values) antithetical to those held by most mestizos, especially nuevos ricos. These values are reflected in one’s comportment and traditional hacendado elites maintain watchful eyes when assessing whether someone is worthy of social inclusion:

Here you have almost correlations. My mom would be very, very tough on us about bringing friends home who – not because of where they came from but because they didn’t have the same upbringing or they weren’t polite at the table – kids who weren’t “educados.” But it ends up being that it is generally the case

that kids from good families have that same type of upbringing so they are more similar to you. So if I would have brought a kid home who didn't come from a good family but was "educado," who would say "Hi," would eat with good manners and would say thank you afterwards, it would be fine regardless of where they came from. And if I brought a friend who was from the greatest family but was a spoiled brat, my mom would not be happy either. But those who were "educados" tended to correlate with those from the good families. Parents always asked who our friends' parents were and they still do.

Traditional hacendado elites expressed concern about how nuevos ricos, mestizos, indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians behave and their treatment of others. At one point or another, my consultants accused all of these groups of imposing bad treatment on people they felt were lower in the social hierarchy. Susana assured me that "hacendados treat people with more respect than 'middle class' people. Cholos mistreat people they perceive are below them. La Sociedad is different and would never treat people so disrespectfully." Hacendado "honor" was consistently offered as a characteristic that exemplifies moral superiority over other populations and continues to undergird paternalistic perceptions that non-elite populations require assistance, protection and elite guidance to develop and progress. As I described earlier, my consultants did not link their own family histories to Criollo or hacendado mistreatment of non-white, non-elite populations or overt monopolization of the country's valuable resources. Instead, they also use continued claims to moral superiority to justify sustaining social and physical barriers between traditional hacendado elites and social climbing mestizos.

Traditional hacendado elites believe that they are more honorable and have more integrity than the majority population. Many described to me that a person's true worth is measured by the honor of "his word." By contrast, they portrayed nuevos ricos as untrustworthy and unscrupulous, the people responsible for Ecuador's rampant governmental and business corruption. In what appears to be a major departure from pre-agrarian reform traditional

hacendado elite aspirations, my consultants expressed little interest in the public performance of political manipulations. Rather, they consistently pointed out that contemporary politics and the business of governance have neither honor nor respect for the traditional values that previously motivated respected politicians like Galo Plaza Lasso. One of Galo Plaza's grandchildren explained the family's current views on politics:

The family is no longer interested in being in politics. Galo Plaza was not a politician. The time was very different and he did what he did because he saw a need. Today is very different. Today you have to be a shark! We were taught that politics is not very clean. My grandfather was doing what he thought was right. He was a diplomat, not a politician. Today, we in Ecuador understand that he was a positive figure.

They made little mention of other traditional hacendado elite figures in other periods of Ecuadorian political history or the intentions underlying their political actions. My consultants are now far more comfortable working the Ecuadorian system safely in the background. While many hold important paid and symbolic positions in the governmental infrastructure, they do not seek out the spotlight of the political arena.

Politics and governmental oversight of the petroleum industry in Ecuador are realms closely associated with corruption and the dishonor of nuevos ricos. Santiago's views on nuevos ricos and their links to rampant corruption and the loss of tradition in the country are representative of many similar discussions I had with my consultants. Santiago explained that in the past, people like Galo Plaza Lasso ran the government, people who had principles and cared about the country's development and progress. According to Santiago, today nuevos ricos run the country. They steal money and are corrupt. They have no honor and only "*quieren hacer dinero facil – sin trabajo y muy rápido*" (want to make money easily – without working for it and very fast). According to Santiago and others, nuevos ricos have earned their money through

corruption – many through oil corruption – and are the cause for many of the country’s most pressing contemporary problems. Other consultants echoed these sentiments and offered individual examples of nuevos ricos who are vulgar and lack the honor that is a marker of traditional hacendado elite status. One such example that multiple consultants offered was Tomás López, the same gentleman discussed in Chapter Three in reference to unacceptable marriage partners for traditional hacendado elites. Just as Tomás’ “cholo” status stained his family in regards to marriage rules, so too did it influence the ways in which my consultants perceived his business practices. Tomás earned a great fortune from the participation in the Ecuadorian oil industry and later opened a bank that practiced speculation and other high-risk business practices. The bank failed, and Tomás fled the country and later served time in an Ecuadorian prison. For my consultants, Tomás’ approach to business and economic development demonstrates his lack of honor and values. That, coupled with his humble “cholo” background, places him and his entire family squarely within the category of social climbers who may have money and educational credentials but lack the intrinsic qualities of educación. It is interesting to consider that Tomás’ business practices were not very different from those that the founders of USFQ proudly employed when establishing the university. The main differences appear to lie in the social background of the actors and the fact that USFQ did not fail. In fact, USFQ’s success could be offered as an example of how genealogy, honor and moral superiority combine to produce business acumen that provide distinct advantages in the global economy and support the reproduction of traditional hacendado elite status and distinction. The next chapter explores this winning combination in greater detail.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on contemporary traditional hacendado elite anxieties about their place in Ecuadorian social hierarchy. My consultants described feelings of unease about how non-elites perceive them in the changing landscape of Ecuadorian social relations. Throughout our conversations, my consultants consistently described their own intrinsic qualities that mark their distinction through the possession of educación. They recognize the importance of education in the sense of titles and credentials received from elite educational institutions in the contemporary environment but insist that those alone do not confer educación. Being educado requires the embodiment of inherent codes of honor, racialized conceptions of social whiteness that link to acceptable genealogy and immersion in educational institutions that instill values associated with elite conceptions of legitimate culture. Contrary to the rhetoric of social mobility offered by nationalist discourses of mestizaje and neoliberal rhetoric about equal opportunity, my consultants' experiences highlight that despite the obstacles that traditional hacendado families face in rapidly changing socioeconomic climates, they remain uniquely positioned to respond to challenges and thrive. The next chapter of this dissertation explores how my consultants are able to combine the markers of historical elite distinction and social separation discussed in Chapter Three with modern forms of non-traditional power and prestige in newly established hacienda tourism businesses. These business ventures are producing new economic capital for these families while also reaffirming long-accepted conceptions of their place in Ecuadorian social relations.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONSUMING AND PRODUCING PRIVILEGE ON THE TRANSNATIONAL HACIENDA



Figure 6: Hacienda Tourism is “The Future” (El Porvenir)

### **“The Past is Our Future”**

My research with traditional hacendado elite families demonstrates that positions of privilege do not simply endure on their own. Rather, they are actively reproduced through cultural and political work required in ongoing negotiations about traditional hacendado elite status and distinction within the wider society. My consultants in Ecuador are able to draw on long-cultivated social networks and other forms of symbolic capital to reinvent themselves in

times of unrest and insecurity. I contend that contemporary Andean hacendado elites selectively use their ancestral links to Spanish colonialism in efforts to capitalize on opportunities in the changing environment. They are able to reposition themselves favorably within national and global spheres of social hierarchy precisely by drawing on bases of privilege that derive from colonialism while also incorporating newly available non-traditional forms of cultural and symbolic capital. Possession of property, education and educación provide a winning combination that my consultants put to work in the global economy to generate economic capital while reinforcing and rearticulating their social power and privilege at home.

This chapter illuminates this process by examining hacienda business enterprises, with a special focus on cultural heritage and ecotourism ventures and their associated performances of hacendado life, that have been implemented on historic family hacienda landholdings in recent years. These enterprises provide a window onto some of the ways that traditional hacendado elites tap into and mold conceptions of history and memory in their efforts to develop an attractive product for sale in the global tourism market while also rearticulating historical social class relations and divisions in Ecuador. My consultants' hacienda tourism ventures denote creative reconstructions of particular colonial ideals that are easily adapted to the conditions of postcolonial global modernity. The ventures also reveal a particularly modern irony wherein their success is tied to efforts to rationalize the historically paternalistic figure of the hacendado patrón according to modern capitalistic businesses principles, while also marketing a softer, sanitized version of this figure and the previous state of the hacienda as exotic products that sell in the global market.

## **Hacendado Capitalists in Andean Ecuador**

Contemporary hacendados have unique access to multiple forms of both traditional and non-traditional cultural and social capital not widely available to the majority population. This capital is helping their families recuperate their economic and social bases of privilege. The driving force behind many of the most successful hacienda tourism businesses in Andean Ecuador are men and women in their 40s or younger. Like their parents, they are connected to one another through familial relationships and close-knit social networks that have been cultivated through a lifetime of shared schooling and life cycle rituals as well as extensive social commitments to one another. They are also the products of exclusive and distinctly Western education systems overseas and at home from which they have nurtured dense networks of like-minded and similarly socialized global contacts. My consultants in this research, the majority of whom are male, consistently and emphatically pointed out to me that they are not agriculturalists, even though they are happily tied to their lands. Rather, they have advanced degrees in business administration, economics, engineering, physics and anthropology (a body of knowledge that they regularly apply in their tourism projects and performances of hacienda life).

Many of my consultants were also on the path to developing successful careers in occupations completely unrelated to their family properties before becoming involved in hacienda business ventures. They described work with multinational financial corporations, high ranking positions within national security sectors and positions with international aid groups, to name a few. One of my younger consultants explained that he developed the concept and business plan for his family's tourism ventures while still studying at the university and expended a great deal of energy convincing his family that investing in such a business was a calculated risk worth accepting. With their advanced education, international experiences and



budding careers, my consultants didn't have to become hacendados. However, as they so often reminded me, they believe that working on the farms for the benefit of their families is a "calling." The notion of responding to a "calling" figured prominently in our discussions about hacienda business for several reasons. First, it neatly linked my consultants' life choices to the traditional hacendado elite's essential connection to land that I discussed in Chapter Three. This intrinsic connection to land and property highlights that their participation in contemporary hacienda business is in some ways a fulfillment of their destiny. When considered alongside my consultants' educational and career achievements, the "calling" also emphasizes their active participation in the choice to develop new hacienda business ventures. My consultants wanted me to be aware that they chose to follow the path illuminated by the "calling." Some consultants contrasted their "calling" to work on family haciendas with other families who see work on family farm as representing a sort of last resort for family members whose performance in life has been subpar:

My grandfather's fear was that his kids would be dependent on the farms. A lot of time what happens now is that the kids who couldn't get a job or weren't smart enough to go to college or were lazy and didn't do well in school, they are the ones who manage the farm. Really. So you know, they have an occupation and they have a salary and they spend a lot of time doing really unproductive things like going to [town] every day to buy medicine for the cows. But I cannot spend my time doing that kind of stuff. I have my suppliers and they visit the farm once a month and I have big boxes of inventory so I don't have to spend all of my time doing this stuff that is not productive.

My up-and-coming hacendado consultants could have made other career choices because they have educación and credentials that make other paths in life possible (and, as many explained, other streams of income to rely on in addition to any salary that is derived from hacienda business enterprises). But their "calling" in life has drawn them back to an important source of their traditional hacendado elite distinction – land and property. They are inspired to breathe

new life into this fount of traditional status through the development of modern hacienda businesses that benefit from many generations of traditional hacendado elite innovation and dedication to entrepreneurialism.

### Hacendado Innovation in the “New Economy”

The ideals of innovation and entrepreneurialism have long been part of the traditional hacendado elite mythology about the intrinsic qualities and characteristics that set them apart from other Ecuadorian social groups. I spent many afternoons discussing the entrepreneurial successes of my middle-aged consultants’ ancestors, successes they rarely linked to historical advantages, monopoly of resources or social inequities. Instead, my consultants emphasized that their families’ successes throughout Ecuadorian history are tied to their creativity, innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit, qualities that are passed on from one generation to the next and nurtured through educational and cultural experiences:

Consultant: You had to be entrepreneurial and get new ideas for the farms. For example, my grandfather had the idea of taking the sugar cane and making blocks of sugar. So he sold blocks of sugar. He made fortunes from panela. He was one of the inventors of mass-supplying panela. The sugar came from one of our farms close to Ibarra. Other people got into the butter business and others into powdered milk. You had to find new ideas. They imported bigger cattle, higher production rates, just innovation was what the good people did. Those people that innovated – brought in new breed of cattle or whatever – they are the ones who fared well.

Jennifer: Where do you think they got their ideas?

Consultant: Oh, well, they read and they traveled. You know, the same thing that happens these days also. (Gabriel)

Consultant after consultant described their ancestors with terms like “entrepreneur,” “innovator,” “work horse” and “progressive.” These qualities are important components of educación that my elite consultants believe help distinguish them from other Ecuadorian social groups. From the

perspective of contemporary traditional hacendado elites, these characteristics led to the pooling of resources in joint ventures that allowed families to control multiple facets of goods production and distribution in the marketplace. Similar processes are also taking place today in the field of hacienda tourism with relatives and friends pooling their properties and marketing strategies to maximize business opportunities. What is striking about the discussions of these past and contemporary joint ventures is that my consultants typically do not acknowledge the advantage accrued through inheritance. Rather, these “innovative” ventures are presented as though they provide examples of how my consultants’ privilege has been earned through hard work, honorable behavior and intrinsic ingenuity, not as the result of inherited privilege that is derived from being part of “las buenas familias.” Diego summarized this succinctly with a simple phrase: “Yo creo que uno le hace al apellido, no el apellido a uno.” This new generation of hacendados may be from “the best families,” but they wanted me to know that they are so much more than that. They are business men and women well-versed in capitalism and with the drive to modernize and revalorize their family properties.

My up-and-coming hacendado consultants claim a Spanish pedigree that connects them to the colonial period and helps legitimize their social classification as members of the best families, or las buenas familias. As I discussed in Chapter Three, their families have dedicated significant effort through the generations to documenting their ancestral connections to Spain and Europe, as well to other hacendado elite families. While the potential for accruing symbolic capital from historic interpersonal connections that include previous presidents, ambassadors, revolutionary figures and Spanish nobility is considerable, I argue that the rapid growth and success of hacienda tourism ventures is tied to this generation’s exposure to, immersion in and

embodiment of the culture of advanced capitalism, which has provided them with access to important non-traditional forms of social and cultural capital.

Like the prominent ancestors who preceded them, my business-minded hacendado consultants are well-traveled and multilingual cosmopolitans who have cultivated global networks of like-minded elites. However, contemporary hacendados integrate their vast connections around the globe via broadband internet, laptop computers, IPads, smartphones, satellite GPS devices and myriad other forms of social media and communications technologies. In fact, these technologies are so ubiquitous that it was very common to have long, grueling trips on horseback through the high páramo grasslands interrupted by the tap-tap-tap of one my interlocutors firing off an email from their smartphones to their business office in Quito or to a prospective hacienda guest.

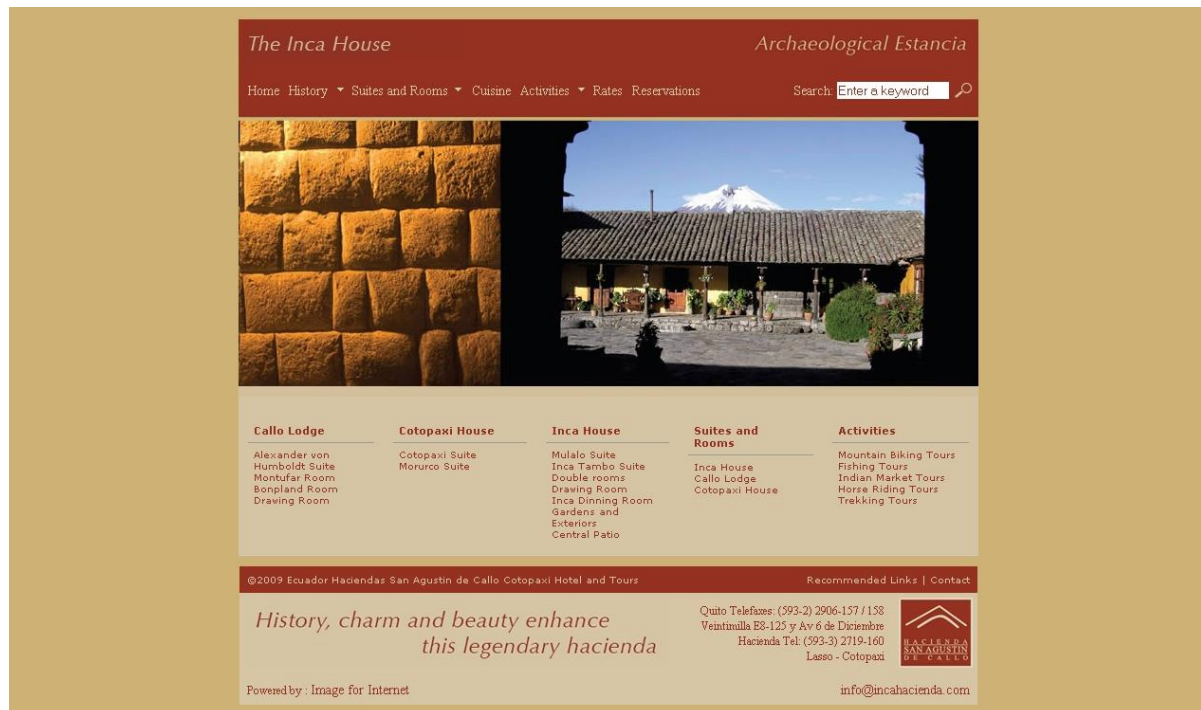


Figure 7: An example of a website dedicated to hacienda tourism.

They also foster new global connections and market their hacienda products through sophisticated websites and popular social and professional networking sites like MySpace, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

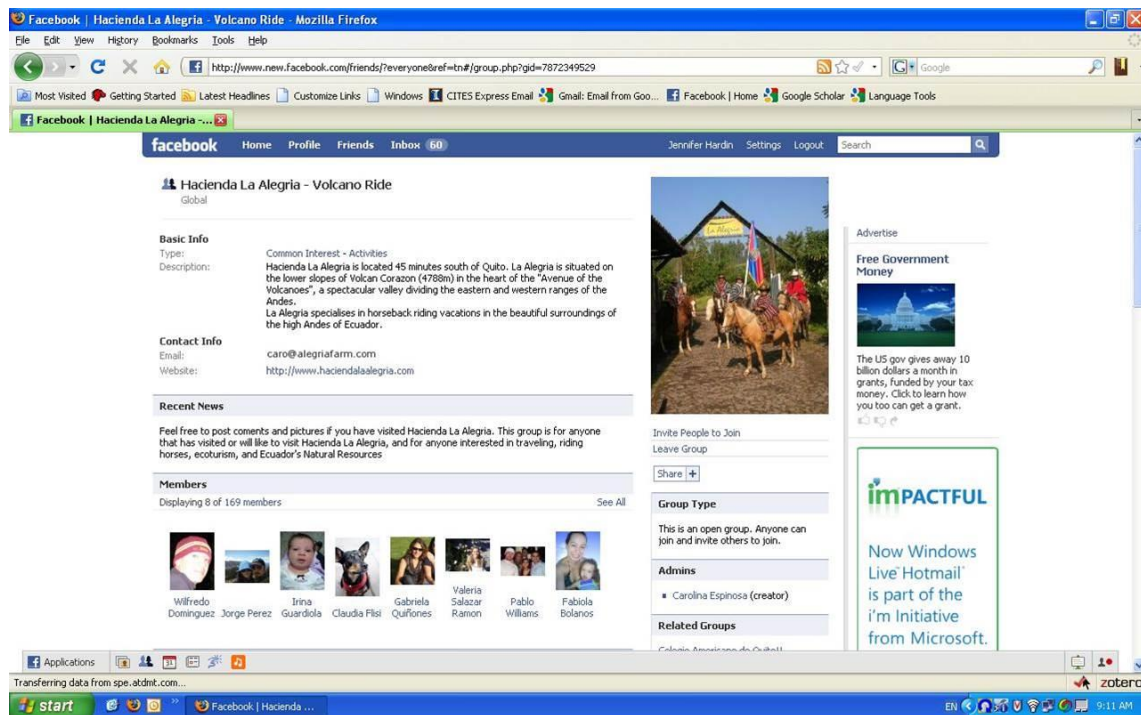


Figure 8: Hacienda Tourism on Facebook

Their enthusiastic incorporation of and reliance on information and communication technologies reflects their genesis as privileged subjects alongside the boom and bust era of the “New Economy” (Thrift 2000:676-677), during which a very particular type of capitalist business knowledge achieved massive dissemination with the help of emerging information and communication technologies. These up and coming hacendados are themselves nodes on what Nigel Thrift (2005:6) calls the “cultural circuit” of capitalism, a post-1960s discursive apparatus

representing the latest permutation of a knowledge economy based on the mass dissemination of practical business knowledge propelled by technological innovations.

In the contemporary expression of the “cultural circuit” of capitalism, high-brow management theories are continuously repackaged as “how-to” and “best practice” manuals and massively distributed through a worldwide social network of business schools, management consultants, management gurus and the media (Thrift 2005:6). This new generation of hacendados tends to enter this circuit by way of their international education and vast networks cultivated while living and/or working abroad. They then expand the circuit by introducing the concepts and techniques into their social and professional networks at home. The application of technology and systematic business and managerial practices were repeatedly cited as key to “modernizing” hacienda ventures to develop products that are desired in a transnational marketplace. These contemporary hacendados recognize that their advanced degrees from elite institutions, technological know-how and knowledge of best management practices can deliver results and achieve new returns from family properties:

No one in their right mind would go out and buy land in this area to just create a farm! The real money in land in the area is for real estate because it is so close to the city. But we have a situation where we already have the land and we don't want to sell it, so let's get the most out of it. It's an okay business but not enough to be worth my time 100 percent. I have a Harvard MBA, so... But it is fun so what I have done is made a system where I can go once or twice a week and it will run smoothly. I have my smart phone and I have my accounting here in my phone and I have Excel worksheets to calculate everything...I mean we are really efficient in that sense. I go there, I type in my stuff – I've taken a lot of time to make everything automated – so I type in my stuff and then I go, which is very different from the way most farms have been run.

This consultant was in the process of implementing a very technologically advanced system for milk production on one family property. When I asked his father about how his son came to know about the system, he replied that his son knows how to run farms like real businesses

because “if you have attended Harvard Business School, learning about farming is easy.” My consultants involved in hacienda tourism expressed similar sentiments about the value of technological applications in their hacienda enterprises and their business acumen in managing ventures as structured organizations that draw on outside expertise to achieve desired results:

We are owners, not administrators. Our generation understands this and the importance of hiring experts to help us brand our haciendas...(Pablo)

I learned about the system from reading. I mean now you have the internet – this is a big difference between my generation and the one that came before – and you can read about a lot of this stuff. My asesor – he was our asesor before as well – he is not from a very good family or anything but he and his family have a farm that they actually live from. They are very, very productive. He also works as an asesor and he works in our farm giving us advice. (Patricio)

The cultural circuit of capitalism’s emphasis on ephemeral qualities like “innovation” and “creativity,” qualities that can be cultivated but not instilled, reinforces long-held hacendado elite ideas about culture, difference and traditional hacendado elite moral and intellectual superiority. My consultants implicitly place themselves within the “culture of smartness,” which refers to elite cultural capital that is composed of habits and tastes as well as overall intelligence that “conveys a naturalized and generic sense of ‘impressiveness’” (Ho 2009:40). My consultants were born with innate characteristics that translate into success in the global market. These characteristics and skills make them uniquely capable of modernizing the hacienda through technology applications, skillful marketing and other capitalist business approaches that contribute to positive “branding,” even if they have not previously been exposed to the types of ventures that they are now operating.

Even though most of my contacts consider themselves to be politically and socially progressive, they tend to view their own experiences as distinct from the rest of the population,

as well as from the generations of inefficient hacendados that preceded them. Pablo, a forty-something male responsible for overseeing a variety of new projects on his family's famous and sprawling farm put it this way:

For me it is very clear, you keep it stagnant and you die. There are other ways. We are a farm that is naturally very stable.... So, we could leave the farm as it is and the value of the land could be enough to keep [it] for another 100 years, I think. But that is not how we are – we are always in new projects and always wanting to progress.

As opposed to the stagnation and inefficiencies associated with their ancestors and still characterizing the contemporary nation, these young hacendados consider themselves to be creative “innovators” whose projects are “future-oriented” and offer the promise of “progress.” At the same time, these business men and women are well-versed in the constraints of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. They understand that “innovation” and “progress” can be costly and have developed belt-tightening strategies that seek to discipline and manage a number of traditional and paternalistic social relations associated with the hacienda form. Hacienda tourism ventures pose a particular type of challenge and opportunity for the new generation of hacendados spearheading these family ventures – they must balance the capitalist impulse for maximizing efficiencies with international market demand with touristic performances of the historic hacendado lifestyle based on multiple, interdependent representations of exotic “traditional” others.

### **Repositioning Landed Wealth: Tourism & the Transnational Hacienda**

In the contemporary climate of global capitalism, tourism is regularly touted as an important vehicle for economic development in the Third World. This is the case in Ecuador, where external and internal development agents aligned with neoliberal green politics, as well as



the Ecuadorian state, promote international tourism projects that emphasize “culture” and “nature” as an important growth area (Babb 2010:5–6; Coronil 2000:363; Goldman 2005; Latin 2002:32). For a new generation of Andean hacendados, tourism is also proving to be an important mechanism for refiguring inherited landed wealth in the form of haciendas that for several decades have been in decline and increasingly are unable to compete in regional and global agricultural markets. Rather than making their haciendas productive in the agricultural sense that their ancestors pursued, these hacendados aim to transform the hacienda into a recognizable branded product in its own right. This process entails managing the “image” of the hacienda and marketing a form of “difference” (Babb 2010:6–7; Hall and Tucker 2004:2, 12; Suchman 2007:8) that is both attractive to international consumers and capable of reaffirming traditional hacendado elite status and distinction in a very unsettled political economic moment. In this sense, my consultants’ hacienda tourism ventures are empowering. They provide an opportunity for my consultants to reclaim control over the image of the hacienda and market representations of it on their own terms and for their continued benefit while also reinforcing traditional ideas about their distinctive place in Ecuadorian society.



An intimate encounter with the Ecuadorian Andes



The hacienda has 15 beautifully decorated bedrooms, all with their own fireplace. Guests have access to cozy reading and living rooms in a peaceful atmosphere. Wonderful home cooking and regional cuisine is offered daily with fresh organic vegetables, trout and dairy produced on the farm.

Zuleta provides a variety of activities. Guests can horseback ride, mountain bike or hike as well as visit an Andean Condor Rehabilitation Project, Indian handsets and absorb local customs. Visitors are hosted by members of the Plaza family, giving you the opportunity to experience home away from home.

For further information of our activities, history and location, please visit our web site:

[www.zuleta.com](http://www.zuleta.com)  
or email us at:  
[info@zuleta.com](mailto:info@zuleta.com)

Figure 9: An offering of authentic hacienda intimacy

Under the direction of these young hacendados, the previously closed hacienda is becoming transnational by tapping into a burgeoning niche market of international tourists seeking “authentic,” “intimate” experiences of the exotic “other” in pristine natural environments. Their successful tourism projects represent a sharp departure from how the Ecuadorian hacienda was viewed and operated in the past. At the root of these growing and successful tourism projects is a transnational hacienda business model that espouses economic rationalization for maximum efficiencies while also implicitly emphasizing the symbolic importance of land as a form of traditional elite capital. At the same time, these contemporary hacendados must attempt to resolve an obvious paradox as they move their families into the future with the implementation of businesses enterprises that invite tourist guests into their ancestral country estates to experience a taste of the aristocratic colonial lifestyle. Their way

forward is dependent upon recreating (or at least simulating) the very past from which they are trying to break free. How are we to understand this apparent reversal from previously accepted cultural practices that maintained the hacienda as a space of social closure? What conditions would motivate embattled traditional hacendado elites to highlight their families' historical associations with a system of structured domination based on racialized conceptions of "otherness" within the national body? My consultants revealed that their motivations for throwing the hacienda doors open to "outsiders" are direct responses to forces of socioeconomic change in Ecuador that have left traditional hacendado elites feeling quite unsettled about their own positions in society.

#### Motivations for Hacienda Tourism

My consultants' motivations for establishing tourism business enterprises on family haciendas were directly connected to socioeconomic changes in the country. By far, the most cited motivation for these ventures related to financial concerns. Susana, whose extended family is involved in hacienda tourism, explained that many hacienda families are having problems maintaining their former economic status because the families have split the lands among descendants or lost portions of land to agrarian reforms, making agriculture more difficult to maintain. One solution for families in this quandary has been hacienda tourism. Santiago also described this phenomenon but added that the predicament has led to "a reversal of sorts" where families are attempting to reunite their haciendas in order to initiate new businesses. Many consultants described that they have difficulty generating enough income from remaining lands associated with hacienda homes to maintain the upkeep on their sprawling estates and pay the personnel that they depend upon for these services because "la casa no producía, la casa daba puros gastos." Hacienda tourism provides an alternative in which the house itself produces

income for the families that can be dedicated to maintaining the history and grandeur of the homes:

This house is humungous so what do we do with the house to keep it up and open? To avoid opening a room and finding it covered with cobwebs? Paola had been in the tourism business all her life and we decided to open it to tourism as a way to keep the house busy, as a way to gather a little extra money for the maintenance, and to some extent as a way for us to do some entertainment, also. (Sebastián)

Families who have lost or sold most of the land previously attached to hacienda homes now have the ability to generate income from what remains. For many other families who still maintain enterprises on their land such as agriculture, dairy farming or cattle, hacienda tourism is a business approach that is not only compatible with existing ventures but often enhanced by those activities.

I believe that the approach adopted by families for hacienda tourism ventures also provides clues about how these enterprises contribute to perceptions of traditional hacendado elite status and distinction. I address this in more detail below but at this juncture I want to point out that while the families may share the goal of opening the hacienda to outsiders for income generation, their methods of achieving that goal often differ. Sometimes these differences result in consternation about true intentions as opposed to convenient rhetoric. This was particularly evident in discussions about the relationship between land protection, conservation and ecotourism, discourse which several families draw on to promote their tourism ventures.

Diminished wealth is just one of the outcomes of agrarian reform. Another outcome that continues to concern my consultants is the ongoing threat – perceived or real – that the government will expropriate the land and homes that families have managed to hold onto. Hacienda tourism, especially ventures that emphasize conservation and ecotourism, provides an

opportunity for families to protect their land from future expropriation. Lands that are set aside for conservation purposes and recognized by the government have protection from claims that they are unused or unproductive. Ecotourism ventures are often dependent on the maintenance of pristine natural environments that have not been subject to overuse or development. Several of the families with whom I worked jointly established a conservation foundation that explicitly brought their lands together for collective designation as protected areas. This designation benefits the families both by protecting the land and by providing fertile environments for ecotourism ventures. Conservation was a common theme of discussion among my consultants but some were quite skeptical of others' true intentions:

Many hacienda families are turning to ecotourism simply because it is a way to make money but not because they know or care about ecology or conservation. The "eco" portion of ecotourism is to these families a "discurso y nada mas." As they have realized that the old system of patrón and client is no longer feasible, they have begun to change their discourse and their strategies to be more in line with the current political economic climate. Rather than having a concern for the environment, their main goal is to maintain their style of life on the hacienda.

True intentions aside, conservation has thus far proven an effective method of land protection but it is not without risks. Owners whose lands now fall within a Parque Nacional must continue to pay taxes on the lands that fall within the park boundaries as "proof of possession." However, this does not entirely maintain the lands as private property or truly protect them from expropriation. Technically, the state has claimed these lands as national resources so owners' "proof of possession" claims to these lands upon which they center many tourism activities are precarious in the long term. Therefore, many of my consultants have steadfastly worked with the government to establish other formal designations that truly safeguard protected lands from government expropriation (e.g., Bosque Protector).

Whether these ventures boast conservation through ecotourism or notable history through cultural heritage tourism, all of the hacienda tourism businesses that my consultants established require investment. Every one of my consultants involved in hacienda tourism reported the need for large initial investments and subsequent reinvestment in operations to meet the demands of tourists. This aspect of the businesses offers additional evidence that my consultants are uniquely positioned to respond to instability wrought by socioeconomic changes in the country. Unlike many Ecuadorians, my consultants have either had access to economic capital or credit for investments in new business ventures. Their possession of property, educación and educational credentials provide opportunities that are simply unavailable to most. This also includes access to funding for conservation and micro-enterprise activities provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental agencies. My consultants have knowledge of such opportunities through their schooling and international experiences; they understand and speak the language of these organizations, and many have themselves worked for similar international aid organizations. This provides unique advantages and opportunities for beneficial partnerships in innovative business ventures such as hacienda tourism.

#### The Social Dynamics of Transnational Hacienda Business Approaches

Since their inception during the colonial period, haciendas have served the dual purpose of marking elite status while also producing income from the labor of indigenous workers tied to hacienda lands that could be used to consume imported articles from Europe and the United States as demonstration of hacendado cultural ideals and values (Hurtado 1980:68). At the same time, scholarly and popular representations of hacienda enterprises have resulted in a notorious reputation for lacking innovation, capital investment or business efficiencies. My consultants who are involved with hacienda tourism are tireless in their efforts to transform the image of

their family haciendas by turning them into bona fide empresas, or businesses. To this end, they are implementing a variety of strategies aimed at rationalizing the traditional social relations usually associated with the hacienda form.

For many of my consultants, ecotourism, conservation and even cultural heritage enterprises can also help to solidify boundaries between themselves and the communities of mestizo and indigenous people that surround their estates. Borders that were previously fluid and porous become solid and permanent in the quest to protect both the environment and the tourists who pay to enjoy it. But enforcement of these borders is contested, as conversations with my consultant José revealed. José described his family's commitment to protect and manage the last bit of primary forest in the area of one of their haciendas involved in ecotourism. Their conservation activities were supported by the Empresa Metropolitana de Alcantarillado y Agua Potable de Quito (EMAAP) because the agency has water ducts on the family's property that bring water to Quito. EMAAP decided to install doors and gates around the property in order to protect the water canals and supply. José and his family were happy about this because they felt that the gates would be key to conserving the natural environment. He explained that without the gates, people in the community would travel freely through their property and hunt animals (including condors), steal livestock and items brought in by tourists and put chlorine in the rivers in order to kill fish. He described the people responsible for these acts as "the ignorant people around here without education or values."

Almost immediately, there were problems with the gates that EMAAP installed. José reported that EMAAP was not managing the doors to monitor and restrict people from the villages passing through the farm. José explained that this posed a particular problem for ecotourism in the farm because in order to have a successful business, tourists needed to feel safe

while they were visiting or camping. José decided to build a guard house at each of the gates and install guards there with radios to communicate with each other and with him. The gates and guards on the property caused problems with the people in the surrounding community who were used to traveling freely through the hacienda lands. Soon the situation came to a head and people from the surrounding community dug large ditches in front of the gates that made it impossible for José to send milk from his dairy business out of the farm for three days. José explained that the effort was spearheaded by the “parochial president,” who claimed that villagers have been able to move freely through the property for the past 300 years because there were no gates on the property. José made it clear, however, that from his family’s perspective while “villagers” may have traversed the property in the past, such incursions still represent trespass on private property. Without gates or guards, this sort of trespass is difficult to control. José also noted that the parochial leader assigned fines of \$50.00 per day against the people in the communities who didn’t participate in blocking the gates of the hacienda. According to José’s account, when faced with this prospect, the people in the communities had little choice but to participate. José further reported that the family lost revenue from 6,000 liters of milk that went to waste because the exits were inaccessible for three days. He lamented that “no one helped us. EMAAP didn’t help and they didn’t protect the doors, even though they had put the doors up in the first place, and the local authorities didn’t arrest the parochial leader even though he was breaking laws by blocking the exits.”

After three days of not being able to send milk to the market, José went to the hacienda with 40 police officers and “took out the doors,” effectively conceding to the demands of the people in the community. According to José, people from the communities are once again trespassing in order to hunt and fish on the hacienda lands. He worries that as time goes on,



more people will realize that gates are no longer there and the hunting, fishing, and stealing will increase even more. Throughout our discussion of these events, José stressed that neither tourists nor the environment were safe as long as the people from the surrounding communities were able to freely access the hacienda. He directly attributed the lack of safety to the community members' cultural characteristics and lack of education. On the one hand, physical borders offered by gates and guards are desirable because they reinforce the social boundaries that educación, formal education and la cultura highlight. On the other hand, gates, guards and designations marking lands off as "protected" do not guarantee that longstanding social and moral obligations to the individuals and communities surrounding haciendas can be erased. Rationalization of the hacienda social relations will not happen overnight or without considerable effort on the part of contemporary hacendado capitalists. They must also direct these efforts to redefining the relationships that tie family members and workers to the hacienda.

A critical component of this process includes what one of my consultants described as the "systematic re-training" of family members and hacienda workers. Family members are being taught to think of the hacienda as a complex "commodity" that is being "put to work" for the long-term benefit of the family, rather than simply as a symbol of social prestige and playgrounds of privilege. The re-training is apparently quite jarring for many family members who, just like the tourists who now roam the halls of their previously private vacation homes, are required to schedule their time in residence and their use of hacienda resources. The new generation of hacendados who are spearheading efforts to turn hacienda homes into efficient businesses that operate according to stringent business principles consistently reported that this creates tensions because family members must respect the boundaries that come with the change. They can no longer come and go as they please with however many guests that they desire. The

needs of the business require that their visits are coordinated and resource use accounted for within standardized forms of tracking and recordkeeping.

Another major source of struggle comes from the symbolism associated with opening the hacienda to outsiders. Operating tourism businesses out of hacienda homes significantly changes the terms of the relationships between traditional hacendado elites and clients and workers who are not part of their social circle. Opening up homes to the public disrupts long-held social conventions about the separation of haciendas and hacendados from surrounding communities and the larger population. Rationalizing social relations includes raising the veil somewhat to expose and offer for consumption the intimacy of the hacienda while also distancing it from residual ties of paternal interdependence that signal hacendado superiority. Valeria, one of the few women I know who are involved in directing these hacienda transformations, described her mother-in-law's discomfort. She explained:

Turning the hacienda into a business was a shock for my mother-in-law at first. Suddenly her house was opened up to strangers who didn't even greet her when she entered the room. She has had a ton of money her whole life and she was raised to be a *patróncita*. She is very paternalistic. Because she has always had lots of money, she is used to buying the finest handmade ponchos to be given away to every single *empleado* and *rodeante* at hacienda rodeos. She wants always to invite tons of friends and family to the rodeos and to spend thousands of dollars paying for their food and drink. For her, the idea of running the hacienda as an efficient business has been hard to accept. *Empresas* are cold and they don't follow custom.

Valeria's mother-in-law was very quick to identify another uncomfortable contradiction in these capitalistic projects. In order to successfully market the "intimacy" of the hacienda, they must also make it more impersonal. To this end, as Valeria alludes to above, strict accounting practices have been implemented at many of these touristic haciendas, requiring family members and friends to pay for their meals and libations, albeit at a discounted rate. All of these

disciplining practices are part of a larger hacienda business model that seeks to maximize profit by minimizing unnecessary costs and maximizing efficiencies. My consultants have instituted practices that standardize transactions and maximize returns among and between the family members and friends who are also their business partners:

The house belongs to my suegros. For every tourist who sleeps in the house and every \$20.00 they spend for food and lodging, my suegros receive net \$5.00 – it is like a special rent but it isn't a fixed rent. It depends on the amount of activity that exists in the business. It is the same with the horses. Because it would be much more difficult to do what we do with any other model due to the high costs associated with constructing the house, buying the horses, etc. But the mountain bicycles belong to the umbrella empresa. Therefore, it is a model in which the initial idea is that the owners of the haciendas see that other forms exist for the lands to be productive that aren't so extractive but in a manner that increases production and conservation. Entonces yes, you can continue raising toros bravos, you can continue with the agriculture but you will be limited in terms of what you can produce today. The one way will produce cien, and the other dos mil. The tourism is a better negocio – you can produce more.

They similarly understand that efficient businesses require clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, even or especially when working with family and friends. Standards of traditional hacendado elite honor and the precepts of capitalist business enterprise dictate that they define the terms of engagement according to the rule of law:

We have seven shareholders (accionistas) – we have a joint venture. It is complex to work with other people on all levels – it is complex to work with the family, with your spouse, with the workers at your business – so it is always a complex process. But the success of these things depends on maintaining everything very clear for all parties. It is very important to spell out roles and responsibilities very clearly. Of course, we had lawyers in the family involved from the beginning to make sure that everything was clearly defined from the beginning.

Efforts to discipline and rationalize social relations on the hacienda extend to the workers employed there. Many of my contacts expressed a strong desire to reduce their reliance on Ecuadorian labor, which they consider to be mired in inefficiencies due to endemic negative

cultural traits. These traits were most often described as “laziness” and “dishonesty,” which were associated with workers’ indigenous and mestizo backgrounds. (One consultant literally begged me to locate people from North America and/or Europe who would be interested in working on their hacienda so that none of their Ecuadorian workers would need to deal with guests.) This means that many workers could be fired during implementation of new hacienda business models based on rationalized labor and seeking greater efficiencies:

With this new system, you also have a big decrease in labor. So will you have to fire people? Yes, but they are people I was already thinking to fire. The cost of labor here is very low but the quality of the labor in Ecuador is also very low. I’ve already fired a lot of people since I started this job. I fired the ones who were stealing or really lazy. But I fired them and paid a huge liquidation so they were happy.

Before, my father had so much work elsewhere that he kind of neglected the farm. So he had a mayordomo and that was convenient because he didn’t have to go there and they didn’t bother him. But he was also stealing money from the farm. The stealing is one part, but the other part is not implementing the strategy correctly and that made the farm just be stagnant. So I had to fire a ton of these people from the farm – some I fired because of the stealing and dishonesty but a lot of others I fired because they couldn’t adapt to a new way of doing things – they didn’t have the ability to change. They wanted to continue doing things in the old way.

As evidenced in the passages above, my consultants regularly discussed their negative perceptions of non-elite laborers. A common topic of discussion was that these deficiencies actually stem from workers connections to Ecuador versus boasting a western European background like my consultants. Apparently, the indigenous blood running through their workers’ veins discouraged hard work. The rationale offered to explain this was that the diversity of Ecuador’s climate and available natural resources discourages hard work because “no matter how lazy you are, you won’t starve.” Ecuador’s ecosystem is like a double-edged sword because it is capable of tremendous production but indigenous and mestizo people don’t

feel compelled to produce any sort of surplus. In contrast, traditional hacendado elites are “more like people in the United States” because of their European heritage, which has instilled a work ethic based on entrepreneurialism and innovation. Recall that many of my consultants understand this difference as wholly distinct from racism. As I noted in Chapter Four, consultants like José were adamant that there is not racism in Ecuador like there is in the United States, stating that “people in Ecuador don’t hate indigenous people. The problem in Ecuador is profound ignorance and a lack of ‘educación’ among indigenous people.” But all is not lost. Some of the deficiencies stemming from a lack of educación and resulting in a less than stellar work force can be mitigated through education. For example, Pablo explained that laborers who have been educated are more likely to accept and implement the best management practices that hacienda enterprises advocate:

One of the main challenges of working out how [the hacienda] will become part of the community is trying to leave paternalism to one side. For example, for me I think it is easier because I work mostly with young people. In the tourism, which is growing now, almost everybody is young and almost everybody has a high school diploma. As a result, almost everybody has accepted the idea of continuous improvement, of programs of quality assurance, of ISO 9000.<sup>54</sup>

Pablo’s comment above highlights another critical path for rationalizing social relations in hacienda business ventures – redefining work relationships to eliminate past relationships based on mutual social obligations. Despite their professed wariness of Ecuadorian labor, most of these same business-oriented individuals often noted that the extremely low cost of wage labor in the country can provide their businesses with an important competitive advantage, but only if

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<sup>54</sup> ISO 9000 is a series of standards, developed and published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), that define, establish, and maintain an effective quality assurance system for manufacturing and service industries. The standards are available through national standards bodies. ISO 9000 deals with the fundamentals of quality management systems.

the potential conflicts and inefficiencies stemming from the haciendas' history of paternalistic relations are able to be neutralized.



Figure 10: The patrón gives direction before a rodeo.

My consultants often conversed with me about the past system of authority on haciendas, which they concurred was often protective, oppressive, autocratic and paternalistic. (Well, actually no one ever reported that their own haciendas were oppressive, just those of other hacendados.) However, all agreed that the hacendado patrón acted symbolically as “father” to his indigenous and mestizo workers who were (and often still are) viewed as having capabilities and knowledge equivalent to dependent children. They expressed that the hacendado’s role also included specific symbolic and material obligations falling outside of typical capitalist wage-labor relations. These obligations reinforced the hacendado’s dominance and superiority over

his indigenous work force (Keith 1977:30–31; Lyons 2006:12; Wolf and Mintz 1957:41–44). For my consultants, the process of creating a hacienda business based on capitalist rationality involves conscious attempts to break with this history of hacienda paternalism. According to many members of the families with whom I work, these paternalistic social and material obligations persist today. They claim that they are still called upon to intervene in legal and state matters on behalf of their workers (and past workers), to provide resources to workers outside of the pay structure and to contribute provisions and gifts for festivals and other communal rituals, among other things. Valeria explained how this can complicate matters in terms of labor relations in haciendas that function as “empresas:”

They want caramellos for Christmas, uniforms for soccer and they want things for the pueblo. The hacienda becomes like the government. The important thing is to work together as partners. Otherwise, it will turn into paternalism. And later it turns into an obligation – for example, if you give a cow to the community every Christmas, after four years it is no longer a regalo [gift], it has become a regla [rule].

As modern hacendado entrepreneurs working to transform haciendas into transnational businesses productive of monetary wealth, they seek to disengage from parochial loyalties and to shed unnecessary social obligations by invoking market-based abstractions that mask the social actors and relations at the root of “rational” wage labor (Comaroff and John L. Comaroff 2001:13). I interpret these actions as a modern way to sanitize still prevalent social ideas about difference and hierarchy through the language of rationality and reason. In the context of neoliberal global capitalism, the exploitation of wage labor carries far less stigma than normalized racial discrimination expressed symbolically and materially through paternalistic servile relations. However, my research in Ecuador revealed that such “traditional” ties are not so easily exorcised in “modern” hacienda tourism businesses.

I believe that all of our ventures associated with the hacienda have to move to a structure that really puts the worker and hacendado on the same level. That relation is changing gradually. But parallel to this and also very important are the traditions in [the hacienda community] - like the tradition of St. John the Baptista, the New Year festival and like the relationship we have had as the provider of land for some social projects and for advice and lending, things like that. [The hacienda] still has that job but because of the economic realities and our inability to continue giving or selling land, we are stopping being the major agent of financing for [the hacienda community's] development projects. ... We have to be now less the patrón and more the community member and an active community member.

This consultant's comments reflect the hacienda's continuing importance in carrying out cultural traditions in many hacienda communities. In this way, ties of social obligation may continue to accomplish important cultural work by highlighting modern boundaries of race, social class, and status. Perhaps even more importantly for my transnational hacendado consultants, such ties of interdependence also figure prominently in performances of "the spirit of the haciendas" marketed to global tourists.

#### Hacienda Tourism Practice and Performance

The hacienda cultural heritage and ecotourism ventures that I considered in my research are as varied and distinct as the country itself, ranging from the pinnacle of urbane exclusivity and luxury to the quaint rustic wildness of the high *páramo*. Visible results of the dissemination of capitalist business knowledge via the cultural circuit of capitalism that I discussed earlier are evident in increasingly sophisticated representations of the Ecuadorian hacienda, its heritage and its patrón that are used in wide-ranging advertising techniques targeting "outsiders" on the global market. These representations have in common a marketing strategy that offers tourists



“authentic,” “intimate experiences” of hacienda life that reflect the “spirit of the haciendas” (*espíritu de las haciendas*).<sup>55</sup>

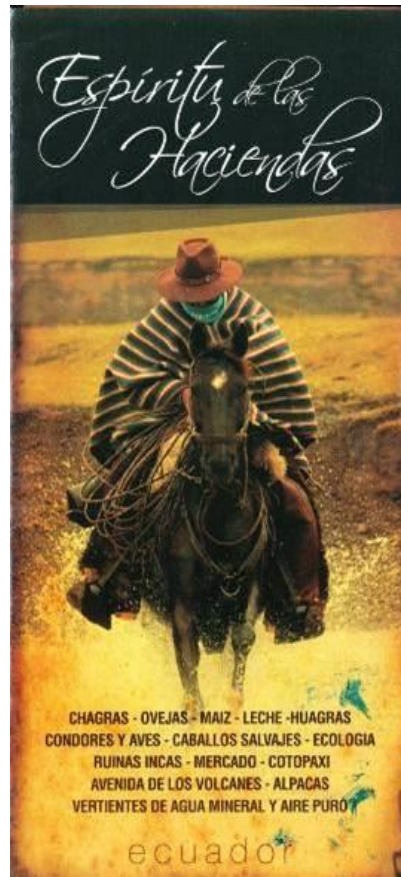


Figure 11: Brochure Promoting “The Spirit of the Haciendas” Tours

This marketing strategy and others like it are the result of collaborations among hacienda

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<sup>55</sup> It is interesting that the image used on the cover of this informational brochure for haciendas in the Cotopaxi area is a photo of a faceless *chagra*. These are the workers on my consultants’ highland haciendas. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, my consultants consider chagras to be mestizo/cholo and therefore occupy a lesser position than them in the Ecuadorian social hierarchy. However, their “authenticity” as quintessential, romanticized Andean cowboys is likely quite alluring for international tourists interested in exotic “others.” Regardless of their marketability for potential clients, my consultants continue to recognize stark lines of separation between themselves and workers like chagras.

Emma Cervone (2010) interprets my consultants’ fascination with the chagra as highland agrarian elites taking advantage of the contemporary tendency toward politicization of ethnic identities in Ecuador to revive rural values for the benefit of elites and with them the figure of the chagra.

owners who are related to one another and participate in the same social networks. They have created a formal association of touristic haciendas that is seeking government recognition as well as access to international NGO funding. As in previous periods of Ecuadorian history, traditional hacendado elites recognize the power and benefits that derive from collaboration with each other. Their joint marketing approach has been very successful, with the ventures showcased in many well-known international print and electronic publications and full hacienda tour packages promoted by international travel agencies. Implicit in their marketing program is the historical importance of land ownership as a form of elite symbolic capital. Consider this excerpt from an article appearing in the April 2009 edition of the National Geographic Traveler magazine:

*Hacienda Zuleta would be my current lodging--and what a lodging it is: a 300-year-old ranch, parked on 5,218 acres between the Pacific coast and the immense Amazon basin, that has been the private home to two presidents of Ecuador, Leonidas Plaza and his son, Galo Plaza Lasso.*

*Now that I'm here, it strikes me as small wonder that the ancient Inca gravitated to the high mountain valleys that surround me. Or that, after their conquests, Spanish victors built fanciful haciendas--centerpieces of vast ranches, styled after Andalusian residences--that were passed down as a birthright by the landed gentry who have ruled Ecuador for centuries.*

***I had heard that Ecuador boasted a passel of haciendas that have maintained their vitality and traditions in part by opening their doors to tourists like me. Still owned by Ecuador's former aristocracy and known for their ranch-style hospitality, they offer a glimpse of authentic hacienda life, a lifestyle that includes fine horses, regal accommodations, and bountiful meals.** As a connoisseur of lodgings around the world, I jumped at the chance to immerse myself in the rich culture of Ecuador in the most immediate way: by staying in some of these centuries-old, family-owned, and sustainably managed estates.*

***In fact, the haciendas are so autentico that they lack advertising budgets or big marketing departments. These haciendas don't find you; you have to find them.*** (Emphasis added.)

The author of this article hit on many of the themes that are so important to my

consultants: haciendas as the birthright of landed gentry, authentic hacienda life and aristocratic owners who are known for their hospitality. But the author incorrectly interpreted the intentional exclusivity of many of these tourism ventures as a sign that the enterprises lack a marketing scheme. Rather, exclusivity is a key theme in my consultants' marketing strategy for many of these ventures. International tourists who can afford it are offered the chance to experience the lifestyle associated with landed wealth in the Ecuadorian Andes, a lifestyle that in the past was all but closed off from most "outsiders" who had not previously been vetted. Tourists who are able to pay the pre-negotiated prices are treated as "guests" and received into ancestral homes where they are surrounded by family photos, portraits, artwork, and collectables that relate a story about the family's importance in Ecuadorian history and society. Interestingly, comments relayed to me by members of the various hacienda families suggest that intra-elite social hierarchy is expressed through decisions about the number of tourists who are received and the costs of the activities they are offered, which can easily exceed \$500 per person per day. The way that guests are received and treated by many of the most famous families as well as the high costs of services provided underscore the "difference" that marks off their social space, regardless of the families' current economic state. This is another mechanism that allows transnational hacendados to reaffirm their elite status and distinction as aristocratic *patrónes*:

Now, the thing is that this is not a hotel and we don't want it to be a hotel! The first thing that distinguishes this operation from a hotel is that it is not open to the public. You cannot knock on the door and ask, "is there a room here tonight." And when you look around, you can see why not. Second, the guests that come here are treated as family guests, as house guests, *not* as clients. There are no charges whatsoever for whatever the guest consumes while here. All meals, all drinks – they want a bottle of champagne, they want some whiskey, whatever – everything is included. So, we don't talk about prices, we don't talk about costs, we don't talk about money, we don't talk about payment. There is no check in, check out, credit cards, or anything like that. The package is prepaid.

So, what is our tourism business like? In the U.S., this is something that is not too common or too well known and that is probably part of the reason that we don't have too many U.S. clients. In Europe, on the other hand, it is an extremely well known thing. You know, an old castle, an old villa, an old chateau that opens to guests while the owners live there and the owners host for you. When we get a group of guests, they come in and are treated as though they are old friends who have been on a long trip and have just come in for a short stay with us. Of course, we have laundry service, we have everything that a five-star hotel could offer but it is all inclusive and we don't talk about money with the guests. If the arrangements are done directly through the website, they have to send a bank-to-bank wire transfer ahead of time. We don't use credit cards at all. This is a place where guests come and stay as though they were family friends.

Sebastián was quite open that he and his family only intend to open their grand hacienda to certain types of guests – those who have money but also good enough breeding to understand that speaking about such things is vulgar. Client vetting is accomplished through carefully chosen agencies, which my consultants emphasized are primarily in Europe and the United States because of their ability to draw the “right type of client.” Some openly scoffed at the notion of using national travel and tour agencies to accomplish bookings. International agencies are able to attract and book guests who are willing to pay the high fees that would naturally be associated with luxury accommodations that also boast direct connections to important historical figures and events. Pablo (who is related to Sebastián and other consultants who expressed similar sentiments) noted that any other type of tourism enterprise would be unthinkable:

The family is interested in developing a particular type of tourism – one that is private, exclusive and caters to needs of the highest strata of travelers. [The hacienda] is in the business of top-level tourism. It cannot be sold in different ways. It has to be like that, in accordance with its importance and its place in Ecuadorian history.

I also want to emphasize that my consultants who are involved in “top-level tourism” expressed disdain for the hacienda tourism ventures operated by some of their friends and family that cater to national guests, as well as a lesser class of international tourists. They appeared perplexed by

the perception that these ventures seem to focus on “quantity over quality.” The fact that these ventures are also extremely successful in part because they are capitalizing on the increasing wealth within non-elite populations did little to lessen their scorn for this approach. I contend that the “exclusivity” of these consultants’ tourism offerings actually underscores their elite distinction and prestige and ensures that most “nationals” don’t breach the social boundaries that have protected the intimacy of the hacienda for many generations.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 12: A seating for lunch at the hacienda.

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<sup>56</sup> Notable exceptions are the weddings that take place in the ornate chapels associated with some of these haciendas. These are expensive and lavish affairs that typically involve one or more elite Ecuadorian family.



Figure 13: Hacienda Accommodation and Service

No matter what level of luxury is provided, “guests” always receive a high degree of personal attention and are attended to by individuals whose “traditional” garb and demeanor mark them as “others” in relation to tourists and their hacienda hosts. Guests can arrange for a wide variety of performative hacienda activities at many of my consultants’ haciendas, including *rodeos* and their associated rituals featuring authentic *chagras*, trips to local indigenous markets, horseback riding in either the “aristocratic” or “Indian” tradition and the prearranged presentation of indigenous festivals such as Inti Raymi. Some of these events are organic and have been occurring on family haciendas for generations. What is different about the events in the contemporary period is that my consultants publicize them to potential visitors as desirable attractions rather than essential cultural traditions. Others, like the ceremony depicted in Figure 14, are staged for the benefit of tourist guests.





Figure 14: An indigenous “ritual” performed for hacienda visitors.

Some haciendas also offer tours of adjacent indigenous communities where guests can observe the “natives” in their “natural” environment. My consultants recognize that such attractions are highly coveted by international tourists who have a thirst for experiences of the exotic (Babb 2010:6–7; Hall and Tucker 2004:12; Weismantel 2001:343–344). Many were actively seeking to develop structured tours that involved partnerships with the indigenous and mestizo communities surrounding their haciendas. However, “authentic” indigenous life apparently also requires some freshening up before tourists can visit:

We have a project to make [the hacienda community] more touristic. We want to fix the houses, paint them and clean everything so that tourists can visit and observe how the indigenous people work and live. The tourists will pay \$1.00 to enter the houses so they can see how they live, how they take care of their small plots of land, their animalitos...you know, so they learn about them. It is interesting. Also, there will be shamans! (Diego)

It is worth noting that Diego's family is intending to pay the indigenous people involved in this project \$1.00 per tourist for inviting them into their homes and lives while the hacienda receives between \$300 and \$500 per night for accommodations in the hacienda house. "Authenticity" and "cleanliness" were recurrent themes my discussions with consultants about projects that involved the communities surrounding haciendas. Another consultant described that their hacienda tourism venture used to have a relationship with some families in the "community" that entailed taking tourists into the community so that they could observe indigenous life. My consultant explained that these community members were "poor people, but not *really* poor. They have their small garden plots, their chicken, cuy, and a few livestock, plus a television, radio and refrigerator" (Christiana). However, the hacienda recently stopped bringing tourists into the community because the "natives'" natural environment had become too dirty and full of trash. Instead, the hacienda relies on staged festivals and ceremonies to meet the demands of their international tourist guests.

A number of tensions and contradictions are immediately evident in these Ecuadorian hacienda tourism projects and their performances of hacienda life. In addition to luxury accommodations and a range of leisure activities, "the hacienda experience" includes essentialized representations of the indigenous and mestizo persons who have historically labored on haciendas, as well as representations of their traditional hacendado patrón. The products being offered to tourists are dependent on a particularly sanitized version of hacienda history and historical significance, neither of which can in reality escape the paternalistic and exploitative relations with hacienda workers that contemporary hacendados would like to shed in their quest for rationalized labor efficiencies. Because they are offering for sale the consumption of hacienda life and hacendado privilege, this necessarily entails the portrayal of a certain



amount of worker subservience and the performance of patrón authority, albeit delivered in a way that is appealing to the sensibilities of the modern cosmopolitan. These are more difficult to show in a photo, as much of this historical relationship was and still is demonstrated symbolically through demeanor, gestures and verbal scripts. Hacienda tourism performances reflect ongoing ideas about difference and social hierarchy that place traditional hacendado elite separate from and above their mestizo and indigenous workers.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 15: Indigenous Festival on the Hacienda

The separation that is inescapable in hacienda tourism performances is almost as pervasive in everyday life. It is punctuated during large public events that potentially bring elites in close contact with masses of mestizos and others who they consider are lacking in educación.

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<sup>57</sup> I must note that I never encountered any Afro-Ecuadorian individuals working with my consultants in their urban homes and offices nor at their hacienda estates or tourism enterprises.

Like the generations that preceded them, my up-and-coming traditional hacendado elite consultants prefer to keep their distance from the popular masses whenever possible, even during large public events like Semana Santa and festivals. One such event within which traditional hacendado elites regularly participate is the Desfile del Chagra in Machachi.

My experience attending the Desfile del Chagra highlighted that even my most “progressive” traditional hacendado elite consultants find some comfort in maintaining figurative and literal separation from non-elite populations. My first hint came when Valeria and Lorena tried to convince me that I should not attend the desfile (parade) unless I participated on horseback. One of the highlights of the festival is a parade that features hacendados and chagras from the surrounding haciendas on horseback and other mestizo and mestizo/indigenous parade participants on foot. My consultants warned me that observing the festivities from the street would be “dangerous.” Once my consultant-confidantes realized that I wouldn’t be dissuaded from observing the festival at street-level, two individuals agreed to accompany me to the parade with the understanding that following the parade procession we would immediately travel to a family hacienda for one of the annual parties that are held in honor of the festivities. Throughout our time at the festival, my consultants were visibly uncomfortable, and they noted several times that this was the first time ever seeing the desfile from “this perspective,” meaning off a horse and as a spectator at street level. One consultant observed that from our perspective on the street, the desfile was actually a “spectacle.” Both consultants talked about the differences between their previous experiences at the desfile and this experience, observing that they never “hang out” in Machachi, but rather go straight from the parade to one of the haciendas with their friends. Once we were safely nestled into the security of the hacienda, my consultants shared that did not like experiencing the parade from the street and that from now on they would will

only participate on horseback.

Based on my experiences with this new generation of hacendados and their families over the course of several years, I've come to the conclusion that performing the role of patrón or *patróna* comes somewhat easily even to the most progressive among the landed elite in Ecuador. In relation to their tourism businesses, the main struggle they articulate is how to provide such performances without incurring lasting costs (exactly how these costs are defined varies). However, I believe that their internal conflict runs deeper than the level of economics as many of these landowners continue to recognize racialized cultural differences that normalize and rationalize their ongoing social separation from the people who work for them. In many ways, the success of their hacienda tourism businesses depends on the maintenance of distance and on their ability to perform as managers of the margins (Orta 2013) of Ecuadorian social life without getting too close to it or becoming so vocal about essential difference that they draw unwanted attention from the masses and the government. Producing privilege is hard work that requires nearly constant movement between coloniality and modernity.

### **Global Capitalism's Subaltern Elites**

The 21st century renaissance of the transnational hacienda and its hacendado patrón as living vestiges of the colonial past is today being meticulously plotted in detailed business plans that are implemented alongside strict accounting practices, ongoing standardized training programs, continuous monitoring of quality assurance measures and the mining of knowledge and creativity through formalized collectivities. All of these practices signal the comfortable immersion of contemporary hacendado elites in a habitus of advanced capitalism. Backed by modern business principles and strategies that are highly valued within the circuits of global capitalism, the performances marketed by the transnational hacienda and its "patrón" in the

global tourism market offer a Disneyfied version of the colonial past. It's a version that appeals to tourist desires to identify with and experience the leisured, aristocratic lifestyle of colonial elites without the sour aftertaste of oppression that made that lifestyle possible in Ecuador and throughout the Western world. While an essential part of hacienda history, namely the oppressive system of racialized domination that fueled the production of colonial and republican wealth, has been quietly pushed into the background so as to ensure that the product offered for sale is attractive to cosmopolitan tourists, the significance of that history for contemporary Ecuadorian social relations is glaringly evident to elite hacendados and to their workers.

There is a tension in these performances aimed at workers and at tourist guests as these hacendado elites attempt to negotiate their subjective positions of privilege in relation to both the wider Ecuadorian society and to Europe, as well as the place of their postcolonial nation within the modern world system. As contemporary hacendado elites strive to reproduce their status in shifting national and transnational fields of power and privilege, the meanings and significance that they and others assign to their ambiguous ancestral legacies and behavioral habits deriving from colonialism also shift according to who is "subject" and who is "object" in the interaction.

In a discussion of the tourist attention that colorful market women (popularly referred to as *La Chola Cuencana*) attract in Cuenca, Ecuador, Mary Weismantel (2003:343-344) writes that the young middle-class, English-speaking, cosmopolitan entrepreneurs employed in the tourist industry in Cuenca find the ironies of their job "almost unbearable" because they are forced by demand in the tourism market to praise "those aspects of the city they consider most rustic and provincial" – specifically, chola market women who epitomize the polar opposite of modernity in the eyes of many Ecuadorian elites and those who aspire for acceptance by elites (2003:344-346). The discomfort that Weismantel notes in relation to middle-class entrepreneurs in Cuenca

is also evident in hacienda tourism ventures. Well-versed in Ecuadorian social and cultural dynamics, history and the dictates of the global economy, contemporary hacendados struggle with contradictions entailed in performing potentially anachronistic representations of hacienda life for wealthy tourists in search of “authentic” experiences of the Third World “other.”

The thoroughly modern irony and the paradox that they face is that in order to make hacienda lands produce wealth today, these business-oriented contemporary hacendados must create representations of a historical past and their place within that past that are considered by many privileged outsiders to be provincial and decidedly not modern, an understanding of history that seeks to naturalize Ecuador’s underdevelopment and marginality in the global system (Coronil 1996; 2000). Ironically, and to the unending dismay of many of my consultants, even if these performances of the hacienda and the hacendado patrón function to rearticulate the social standing of hacendado elites within Ecuadorian society, they also have the high potential of similarly transforming hacendado elites into curiosities plucked from an exotic “living past” that is bought and sold on the global tourism market (Coronil 1997:16). My traditional hacendado elite consultants can never be entirely sure how white and European they are in relation to their tourist guests from the United States and Europe. Coming full circle, we conclude where this dissertation began – contemplating the traditional hacendado elite experience of ambivalence about their own liminal position squeezed between multiple and competing identities and conceptions of modernity on the ever-changing landscape of social relations in Andean Ecuador.

## CODA: REPRODUCING PRIVILEGE ON SHIFTING POLITICAL ECONOMIC TERRAIN

*I think it is very important to understand the essence of who you are, not just the celebrity of your name. Some in my family live in the 19th century still and some want to go to the 21st century without taking care of history and understanding the development in family and in social ties to the community. They say, "But the farm over there doesn't do what we do." And I say "that farm isn't [our hacienda] and they don't have the history of [our ancestors]. If you don't pay attention to that, people will forget everything that our ancestors did and they will invade or whatever. People are always thinking about invasions and that is ridiculous in today's world. That is very typical of the higher classes – thinking about invasions and scared of losing their position. They want to keep the status quo. But people forget that [our ancestor] changed the status quo of the hacienda system and he had a lot of balls to do that. He was a visionary. We have to have a vision for the future. (Juan)*

*Development is basically a political process, especially in Latin America. You have to change power relationships. Why are we underdeveloped? Because we have historically been controlled by little powerful groups – our elite. So, you have to change these power relationships and we are doing exactly that through very democratic processes. Changing institutions, changing policies, and changing programs. (Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa on The Charlie Rose Show, PBS, April 13, 2014)*

The preceding chapters of this dissertation examined traditional hacendado elites' long history of maneuvering and negotiating their positions of privilege in the face of threats and instability that have included the imposition of colonial powers, elite diversification, agrarian restructuring, economic booms and busts, growing indigenous social movements and the emergence of newly wealthy Ecuadorians who may not share the same goals for national development and the terms of legitimate culture. Traditional hacendado elite positions of privilege do not simply endure without individual and collective effort or negotiations with the wider society about the accepted terms of status and distinction. My consultants in this research (and the ancestors that preceded them) actively reproduce their status and distinction through focused material, ideational and discursive daily practices that facilitate the reconstitution of

power, privilege and domination in rapidly changing contexts of globalization. With economic, cultural and social capital that has been accruing since the Spanish colonial period, my consultants continue to be better positioned than most Ecuadorians to respond to all sorts of challenges that emerge from new socioeconomic conditions. They draw on their ancestral links to Spanish colonialism in their efforts to capitalize on opportunities in the changing environment and develop innovative business ventures that resonate with the demands and desires within the global economy. In these efforts to reposition themselves favorably within national and global spheres of social hierarchy, traditional hacendado elites have benefited both from bases of privilege that derive from colonialism and their ability to incorporate newly available non-traditional forms of cultural and symbolic capital that are not within the easy reach of most Ecuadorians but highly valued in the realm of global capitalism. Like capitalism, many of these families have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and flexibility when confronted with the contradictions and tensions arising from the relations of domination that fueled their historical dominance. However, traditional hacendado elite resilience is not a forgone conclusion as new sources of transformation will continue to emerge in Ecuador and threaten the terms of their distinction.

A new period of transformation in Ecuador began to unfold during my extended research in the country. In 2006, Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado was elected president of the country with the pledge to defeat elites and the corruption of political parties in order to bring about greater prosperity for “el pueblo” through socialist reforms. Key to this proposition of greater prosperity for the masses was liberation from both corrupt leaders and dependency on the United States. The unifying symbols of Correa’s 2006 political campaign were visual and auditory representations of a whip (or belt – “correa”) that accompanied the campaign slogan “Dale

Correa!,” which translates “Whack ‘em Correa!” (Whitten and Whitten 2011:137). Correa’s promise to “crack the whip” over the backs of elites and political parties turned the historical imagery of the hacendado whipping his indigenous workers on its head. Correa promises a “Citizens’ Revolution” that will reduce poverty and inequality with “...a radical and rapid change in the existing structures of Ecuadorean society” (Correa 2012:90). A foundational piece of the Citizens’ Revolution was the development and adoption of a new constitution in 2008 that greatly increased executive powers in the country and included important proposals for addressing social inequality, natural resource protection and instituting social and economic policies that would benefit the majority of the country’s people.

On the surface, Rafael Correa might appear to reflect traditional hacendado elite conceptions of the powerful but dangerous population of nuevos ricos that I discussed in Chapter Four. He was born and raised in Guayaquil in a family of modest means but went on to earn advanced degrees in economics from universities in Europe and the United States, including a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Conversely, he professes that his political and economic reforms are catalyzed by his Catholic faith and commitment to Liberation Theology precepts aimed at eliminating poverty. Thus, he doesn’t neatly conform to traditional hacendado elite representations of nuevos ricos that emphasize their corruption and lack of values or honor. His targeting of corruption in banking, petroleum and politics may actually underscore my traditional hacendado elite consultants’ assessment in Chapter Four of the “nuevos ricos” responsible for many of Ecuador’s contemporary problems. In conversations with my consultants about President Correa in 2006, 2007 and 2008, most expressed ambivalence about Correa and his reforms. They recognized the need for change that would address rampant corruption and inject some political stability in the country, which they noted



was critical for both their hacienda business ventures and future economic development. At the same time, they expressed anxiety about Correa's targeting of elites and many of his propositions that could threaten their tenuous hold on land and access to other spaces of material and symbolic privilege. While a detailed analysis of President Correa's political agenda is beyond the scope of this dissertation, an examination of some of his key initiatives in the Citizens' Revolution will illuminate the obstacles that may confront traditional hacendado elites as they maneuver to reproduce their status and distinction on political economic terrain that is once again shifting under their feet.

### **Social Mobility through Education**

President Correa's government has instituted important changes in the Ecuadorian educational system. The 2008 Constitution made all public education in the country free, including higher education in public universities. The President, himself once a professor at the private Universidad San Francisco de Quito (see Chapter Four), has stated that access to education is a key component for reducing poverty and inequality in the country by providing equal opportunity to all Ecuadorians. Recognizing that there exists a great range in the quality of higher education available to students, legislation also passed that increased university regulation and sought to enhance accountability so that university curricula and focus areas are more responsive to the country's development needs. Like my traditional hacendado elite consultants, President Correa believes that education is critical for social mobility in the country. I discussed the role of education in relation to elite goals for national identity formation and socioeconomic development in Chapters One and Four. I examined how these ideas connect with my traditional hacendado elite consultants' race thinking crystalized in notions of blanqueamiento wherein the country's lack of economic development is the result of essential cultural traits among non-elites

that may be partially overcome through education. Correa's emphasis on accessible education that specifically meets the needs of economic development in the country corresponds with my consultants' views about the upper limits of social mobility for non-elite Ecuadorians.

Academic leaders and teachers in Ecuador have expressed concern that Correa's education policies threaten the autonomy of educational institutions but the reforms will likely have little impact on elite institutions. A majority of the President's educational reforms target public institutions and those that affect private schools will likely only highlight the quality of elite institutions and the curricula offered therein, such as USFQ, Colegio Menor and Colegio Americano. At least for the foreseeable future, elite private educational institutions in Ecuador will continue to function as a social space that nurtures the qualities and competencies that define "legitimate culture" and contribute to successful maneuver in the global economy. In addition, as long as there are real and perceived discrepancies between the quality of public and private elite schools, these institutions will provide opportunities for my consultants to capitalize on the increasing economic upward mobility in the country, while also effectively reproducing existing social class relations. They will accomplish this by reinforcing the unequal distribution of elite cultural capital and legitimating the elite (Western) values and ideals that are transmitted to students. Elite educational institutions offer socialization into a particular "cultural tradition" and thereby symbolically impose the limits of social mobility by reifying notions of traditional hacendado elite superiority based on their essential social whiteness, or *educación*, which is partly a product of their Spanish heritage and multigenerational connections to modernity (see Chapters One, Three, Four and Five).

## Land Conservation versus Natural Resource Extraction

*The Correa government is already talking about a new round of agrarian reforms. If that happens, people will fight with their guns for their land. The government says that it intends to take land that they consider “abandoned,” meaning that it isn’t being worked. That designation is very subjective. (José)*

*Correa is talking about a new agrarian reform. I don’t feel nervous because progress has to come and if you have been responsible, then people around you will understand that. But there are other people who should be nervous because they haven’t been responsible. Although, sometimes even when you are responsible things are not considered in the heat of the times... (Pablo)*

The statements above reflect my consultants’ concerns about land expropriation immediately following the election of Rafael Correa in 2006. When President Correa was elected for an unprecedented third consecutive time in 2013,<sup>58</sup> he pledged to deepen the Citizens’ Revolution by advancing laws that would redistribute land deemed “unproductive” to poor Ecuadorians. Such promises likely increase anxiety for many of my traditional hacendado elite consultants. The preceding chapters examined the enduring relationship between the possession of landed property and traditional hacendado elite privilege and distinction. Spanish colonists carried the notion that possession of land constituted a principal source of wealth and supported development of racialized forms of social prestige; two social realities that have carried through to the present day (see Chapters One, Three and Four). Two periods of agrarian reforms in Ecuador during the 1960s and 1970s threatened this relationship and exposed my consultants’ families to unprecedented levels of uncertainty (see Chapter Two). Many of those who lost lands to government expropriation or indigenous invasions also feel an emotional loss from the forced

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<sup>58</sup> At the time of this writing, President Correa is halfway through his second term under Ecuador’s latest constitution. Originally elected under Ecuador’s previous constitution, he resigned during his second year of the first term to run again under the 2008 constitution. He has been elected twice under the 2008 constitution.

redistribution of their landed wealth (see Chapters Three and Four). Even those families not significantly affected by the agrarian reforms expressed a palpable anxiety that the Correa-led government and/or non-elite Ecuadorians will seize their remaining properties, as expressed in the two quotes above. Traditional hacendado elite fears about future expropriations are connected both to their beliefs about their families' essential (and embodied) connection to land in Ecuador (Chapter Three) and the importance of land in contemporary hacienda business ventures that may help them increase their economic capital, such as cultural tourism and ecotourism (see Chapter Five). The possession of land also helps these families maintain the lifestyle associated with their status and provides additional opportunities by assuring access to credit and other forms of financial leverage that are still not available to most Ecuadorians (see Chapters Three and Four). The ability to consume the hacienda remains fundamental to the reproduction of traditional hacendado elite privilege.

President Correa has so far sent mixed messages when it comes to his government's approach to land and natural resources in Ecuador. While the government has voiced support for safeguarding natural resources and biodiversity in the country's protected areas, the fight to eliminate poverty that is a centerpiece of the Citizens' Revolution is dependent on government spending financed by resource extraction and exportation, namely petroleum and mineral mining (gold and copper). This recently led to a decision to allow oil mining in the Yasuní National Park, a decision that will likely have very negative effects on the indigenous populations living within the park. The continuing dependence on oil extraction and exportation for improving social conditions in the country does not appear to deviate substantially from the strategy of previous governments. It remains to be seen if Correa's platform on land reforms and state control of natural resources will truly threaten traditional hacendado elite's remaining hold on

property or the businesses they have established on hacienda lands (see Chapter Five). On the other hand, Correa's focus on "el pueblo" and simultaneous denigration of "elites" and indigenous peoples who oppose his policies may actually reaffirm the racialized system of social hierarchy that has dominated in Ecuador since the colonial period.

### **Racialized Social Hierarchy & the Definition of Legitimate Culture**

This dissertation has examined the historical production and subsequent reproduction of elite status and distinction that is predicated on racialized conceptions of cultural difference. Since the Spanish colonial period, traditional hacendado elites have justified their monopolization of resources, social separation from other populations and the country's chronic "underdevelopment" with material and symbolic practices that underscore their civility and modernity in contrast to the backwardness and vulgarity of indigenous peoples, Afro-Ecuadorians and mestizos. Chapters Two, Three and Four illustrated that despite multiple periods of drastic transformation in the country, traditional hacendado elites continue to practice racial reductionism by drawing on colonial categories of "español," "mestizo," "indio" and "negro" to segment Ecuadorian society. My consultants associate the country's ongoing social and economic problems to essential negative cultural traits exhibited by non-elites but they also believe that the effects of these undesirable traits can be lessened (albeit not wholly eradicated) through education. Traditional hacendado elites demonstrate their superiority through their styles of life and patterns of consumption that point to a long history of Western education, cosmopolitanism and immersion in global modernity. Most importantly, their distinction is established by the possession of educación – intrinsic qualities like "honor" and manners of behavior that set them apart from upwardly mobile mestizos, especially those considered nuevo rico and associated unscrupulous practices and corruption. Some of my consultants have also

been able to capitalize on this racialized system of social hierarchy with elite educational institutions and hacienda tourism ventures that rearticulate these historical social divisions with creative reconstructions of colonial ideals that are adapted to the demands and desires of global modernity.

Notably, it appears that President Correa's discourse championing a Citizens' Revolution may actually advance my traditional hacendado elite consultants' views on the natural order of Ecuadorian social hierarchy and the definition of legitimate culture underlying their distinction. Correa never directly draws on the intertwined ideologies of mestizaje or blanqueamiento in discussions of "el pueblo." However, the 2008 constitution, the education policies described above, a continuing outwardly-oriented and extractive development strategy and the President's vocal responses to indigenous activism do little to interrupt the racialized categorization of Ecuadorian society or common tropes about the country's path to progress and development. Ecuador's 2008 constitution acknowledges that the country is "multicultural" and "plurinational." The constitution recognizes the right of indigenous populations to live according to their own culture, language, and traditions. This framing of diversity within the country is reminiscent of traditional hacendado elite perspectives justifying continued social separation with clear lines demarcating the boundaries between blanco (español), mestizo (cholo), indígena (indio) and Afro-Ecuadorian (negro). In addition, Correa's emphasis on development programs and policies that will benefit "el pueblo" coupled with his static characterization of "elites" and verbal assaults that describe indigenous activists who oppose him as infantile, anti-development and anti-progress have the potential to simply reify the colonial categories of essential difference that this dissertation has described.

The Citizens' Revolution that the Correa government is vigorously pursuing focuses squarely on redistributing wealth in the country to benefit "el pueblo," which could provide opportunities for "the people" to redefine the ideas, symbols and practices that provide the bases of distinction and status in Ecuador to be more in line with popular forms of culture practice. On the other hand, President Correa's approach for ameliorating poverty through economic development in Ecuador does not appear to be antithetical to material practices and forms of ideation that mark off traditional hacendado elite status and distinction. Correa's push for economic development fueled by educational systems that champion innovation and deeper integration in the global economy aligns with the ideals espoused by my consultants and many of their ancestors. Similarly, the President's strident criticism of "elites" who he associates with corruption, dishonorable behavior and suspect values aligns very well with my consultants' assessments of nuevos ricos - wealthy people who lack proper "values," are culturally closer to "indio" than "español" and do not appear to aspire to the goals of blanqueamiento and its implicit judgments about what constitutes the realm of legitimate culture in Ecuador. In effect, the current government's programmatic and policy priorities are potentially bolstering traditional hacendado conceptions of educación and its symbolic importance in Ecuadorian social life.

Ultimately, President Correa and my traditional hacendado elite consultants seem to share a desire to improve the terms of their country's ambivalent integration in global relations of geopolitical power. Just as Correa's ongoing dedication to economic development and poverty elimination through resource extraction and exportation runs the risk of reproducing Ecuador's marginal status in the global division of labor, my traditional hacendado elite consultants involved in hacienda tourism struggle with the potential contradictions implicated in reproducing historical relations of power that may mark them as non-modern in relation to their tourist

“guests” thirsting for the experience of exotic Third-World hacendado “Others.” A paradox with which my consultants must contend is that in the process of rearticulating the social standing of traditional hacendado elites within Ecuadorian society, they may also actively participate in an understanding of history that seeks to naturalize Ecuador’s underdevelopment and marginality in the global world system. The marking of individuals within social hierarchies according to descent and irreducible difference has been a central component of the modern era by obscuring the antagonistic social relations at the heart of their historical construction – specifically the social relations of colonialism, bureaucratic state formation, and capitalist development. My consultants’ dependence on a racialized system of social hierarchy potentially cuts both ways – bolstering their status and distinction at home while symbolically affirming Western European notions about the essential reasons for their country’s lack of progress. The tenacious life of race thinking, as an outgrowth of the violent, exploitative, and exclusionary foundations of the modern era, is a legacy with which we all must now contend as we struggle to negotiate a post-modern, post-colonial form of global interdependence and interconnectedness within the structures and constraints of global capitalism. For my traditional hacendado elite consultants, this struggle will entail continuing to find novel methods for consuming the hacienda in order to reproduce hacendado status and distinction while maintaining a precarious balance of innovative global modernity, creative reconstructions of selected colonial ideals and the continued valuation of forms of symbolic capital that affirm the existence of intrinsic irreducible difference in Ecuadorian social relations.



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